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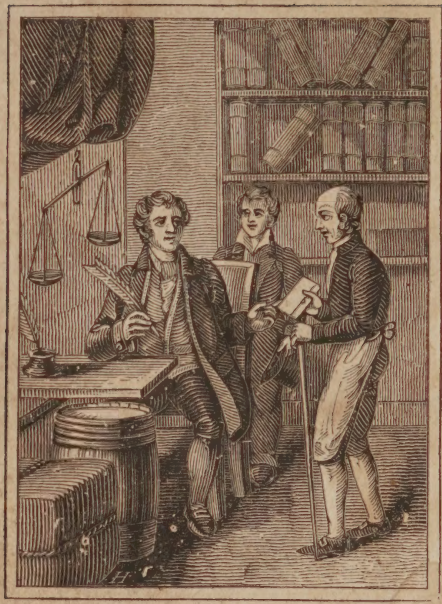

"Wonder not that I am anxious that you should be industrious, for this is a point of high moment. Diligence and punctuality are of great importance, in every kind of business. They preserve order and harmony, both in the mind, and in the management of affairs; they secure interest, credit, and influence with those who have power to assist us. Dr. Franklin, in his Memoirs, earnestly inculcates industry, that others might know the use of a virtue, to which he was so largely indebted for his own advancement."....Page 83.

COUNSELS AND CAUTIONS

FOR YOUTH,

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS FROM A FATHER TO HIS SON.

ON PERSONAL CHARACTER,
PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS, COMPANY,
SPENDING THE SABBATH, READING IMPROPER
BOOKS, TEMPTATIONS IN BUSINESS,
DANGER OF FORMING BAD HABITS, ERRORS
PREVALENT IN THE WORLD.

BY J. THORNTON.

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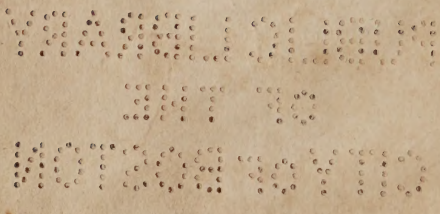

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PREFACE.

The favourable reception of a former series of letters, laid before the public, has induced the author to prepare the present volume, for the use of the same juvenile readers. But while he keeps in view the same class, it is with a recollection of their advancement in years, and with a reference to those circumstances and changes, which usually attend them. In a word, a somewhat later period in the morning of life is here specifically marked out, and such hints and advices are freely given, as were thought adapted to that interesting period. If the first volume formed a suitable present for a young man entering upon his apprenticeship, this may be found not less appropriate to the conclusion of the term.

The letters in both volumes were actually written to a son, who at the same time was engaged in the occupations and animated with the prospects

of business. Though he has since been called to fill a very different sphere, there is nothing in this circumstance which can in the least affect the case of those, whose destiny is a commercial life, and for whose benefit these epistles are *now* intended.

The author has intermixed his counsels and admonitions with a considerable number of facts and anecdotes, as he is well aware that few young people can long endure cold abstractions, or much relish dry precepts. Nor must he refuse to acknowledge his obligations to some of our best writers, whose authority and names he has freely borrowed, to recommend opinions and habits, deemed highly important to the rising generation. It was the author's first intention, in this as in the former volume of letters, to withhold his name; but the wish and entreaty of friends whom he esteems has induced him, though with some reluctance, to insert it.

BILLERICAY,
January 31, 1829.

COUNSELS AND CAUTIONS.

LETTER I.

IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER.

My dear Son,

The same motive which induced me to address a series of letters to you when commencing your apprenticeship, impels me to resume my pen, now that you have closed that period of servitude, and are entering upon a new sphere of action. In the centre of an opulent metropolis, which has become the mart of nations; whatever advantages of a commercial kind may be placed within your reach, yet I cannot forget, that you are surrounded with temptations and dangers. You have some Christian friends, who have shown you attentions, for which I hope you are grateful; and who may in future readily aid you by their counsel and kindness; but none can feel so deep and lively an interest in your welfare, as the parents who watched and guarded your first years, and will continue with tender solicitude, through every stage of life, to blend a concern for your happiness with their own. In the epistles which follow the present, I shall confine my attention to a comparatively narrow range of topics, and introduce such things only as are likely to be useful. Whatever in the

course of my reading and study, life and experience, has appeared fitted for informing or impressing the youthful mind, I have carefully written down, principally with a view to the improvement of my dear children; but collaterally, with the desire of conveying hints of instruction and warning to any of the rising generation, who are placed within the sphere of my acquaintance or influence.

Few young persons, in the commencement of their arduous career, have any adequate idea of the incalculable value of a good character, of the process by which it is formed, or of the causes and occasions by which it may be injured or destroyed. If the basis be too narrow, or the ground-work frail and treacherous, the superstructure cannot be solid and enduring. Too many, alas! wish to acquire respect and esteem, without possessing any fundamental principles of rectitude, without adhering to any clear, definite rules of conduct. Much is often said, in general language, on the importance of a good character. But what, it may be asked, is a *good character?* This question ought to be well weighed, or it cannot be satisfactorily answered. Praise or censure may be misapplied and unavailing, if the object is not clearly defined; as an arrow shot with the greatest force is in vain, if the mark be not aimed at nor seen.

Firmness and gentleness, the sterner virtues and the softer graces, must be combined to form what deserves to be called a good character. *Fortitude* has been thought by some of the sons of delicacy and refinement, a piece of knotty stubbornness; a virtue fit only for an iron age. But it will surely be admitted by all competent judges, that strength and stability are of far higher importance than matters of taste and ornament. There are certain

moral qualities, such as truth, justice, integrity, temperance, and chastity, without which the most brilliant talents and attainments, and the most captivating manners, are worthless; nay, even injurious, both to the individual and to society; and the prime elements of character unquestionably demand the first attention.

Many young persons, upon their entrance into the world, are gravely advised by their friends, to beware of falling into *gross* vices, and yet to take special care and not carry even their *virtues too far*. A low, flexible morality is inculcated, a morality of mere expediency, with a scale of present profit and loss, but no reference to the weighty sanctions and motives of religion. Nor have some divines scrupled to lend their authority to recommend this flimsy and fallacious scheme. Dr. Blair, in a sermon addressed to youth, says "Bad as the world is, respect is *always* paid to virtue. Whether science, or business, or public life be your aim, virtue still enters for a principal share into all those great departments of society. It is connected with eminence in every liberal art, with reputation in every branch of fair and useful business, with distinction in every public action." How would a young man, who believed this specious statement, be surprised and shocked on being introduced to the average society of our crowded cities and large towns. Instead of seeing virtue every where, and always respected, in many places he would even see the very faint remains, the shadow of virtue, in the more sober and circumspect, held up to contempt. It is therefore foolish or disingenuous in the highest degree, to deceive the inexperienced by such flattering representations.

Lay it down, then, my son, as a maxim, that

morality requires to be rooted in the conscience, mixed with the fear of God, and watched with unremitting vigilance. The principle of expediency, as it is called, is too shifting and precarious, to supply a fixed and elevated standard; too lax and pliant, to give vigour to the mind and consistency to the conduct. The virtue which grows out of the superficial soil of modern philosophy, or worldly prudence, will not bear the rough blast, and often withers even under a warm sun. But it is not enough to have the understanding enlightened, and the judgment informed and settled. Right principles, though highly valuable, do not necessarily insure right actions; for the state of the will and the feelings is to be taken into our account. There is nothing more dangerous to young people, when the character is forming, than an exquisite and ill-governed sensibility. Hence their fear of offending lays them open to numberless temptations. They have courage to undertake almost any hazardous exploit, in conjunction with their associates; but cannot bear the charge, hardly indeed the suspicion, of *singularity*. To avoid this dreaded charge, they often yield compliances which equally oppose the decisions of the understanding, and the dictates of the conscience. To this weak side, which is soon discovered, the enemy seldom directs his assault without making an impression, and often a breach; and then post after post is carried, till the citadel itself surrenders. It is to the same cause that we must attribute the mighty power of ridicule over the young. They shrink, like the sensitive plant, from the bare touch of reproach and contempt. Arguments they could answer, threatenings they could despise, privations they could endure; but the sneer, the taunt, the

sarcasm, and subtle insinuation of the witling, is less easy to be resisted. It is the ardent desire to please, joined with the trembling fear to offend, which so often induces young men to have recourse to temporising contrivances, and contemptible half-measures. The weight of duty hangs on one side, and the force of temptation acts on the other; hence a state of suspense ensues, till some dexterous adept in casuistry steps in, and suggests a convenient middle course. Redwald, one of the Saxon kings, is said after his profession of religion, to have set up in the same temple one image to his favourite idol, and another to Jesus Christ; and Bellarmine, the great champion of popery, in his last moments, bequeathed one half of his soul to the Virgin Mary, and the other half to her son. You, perhaps, smile at these curious kinds of compromise, drawn from history; but there are many instances in life around us, which would scarcely appear less strange, or less shocking, if they were made equally palpable, and stripped of every appendage and disguise. The authority of the great Sovereign of the universe is verbally acknowledged, but some beloved idol is still retained; virtue claims absolute universal dominion, but the gay goddess of pleasure usurps half the soul. While my object is to convince you of the worth and importance of a firm and decided character, I feel it necessary to warn you against those devices and expedients which are contrary and hostile to it. There are men who labour to confound the limits of good and evil, and to remove the ancient landmarks of the moral world. Listen not to their sophistry, whether it is in the form of grave reasoning, or of facetious raillery. There are paths of error and obliquity fair to the eye, strewed with

flowers, and hung with tempting forbidden fruits. Enter them not with the presumptuous hope of advancing but a short distance, and then returning in safety; for amidst the bustling scenes of commerce and traffick, multitudes set themselves, like their goods, to sale. The character, torn to tatters and fragments, is disposed of by pieces to the highest bidder. One carries off truth; another justice; a third probity and prudence, packed together; a fourth honour, conscience, and consistency; (strange to tell) all in one lot. Whatever you part with, my dear friend, remember that your moral and religious principles are too precious to be sold or bartered, nor should you consent on any terms to have these jewels sullied and stained by the slightest touch of corruption. It will aid your firmness and decision, to reflect on the radical meanness and pusillanimity of the deceitful time-server. However deep his schemes, and dexterous his contrivances, they cannot be long hid; and who, that has any generous and manly spirit, does not despise and abhor such base conduct, and the motives which produce it? Speak falsehood, say some, that you may draw out truth; and Jason the Thessalian used to say, Some things must be done *unjustly*, that many more may be done *justly*. But the answer is ready, the end cannot sanctify the means; present justice is in our power, but of future justice we have no security. Yet success, perhaps, compensates for the loss of honour. Success! and where, I ask, is it so seldom seen, or so surely sacrificed in the long run, as among those who prefer a versatile, wayward, accommodating policy, to honest, straight-forward, inflexible principle? They are involved in a web of their own weaving, and, after some time prac-

tising duplicity, usually become victims to those who are greater proficients than themselves.

But important and valuable as firmness is, the character ought to have the softer graces of gentleness and affability superinduced upon it. Some have mistaken obstinacy for decision; acrimony, harshness, and contradiction, for boldness, spirit, and independence. Though most young people, as before intimated, dread the idea of being singular, there are certainly some who glory in a useless and repulsive singularity. Such eccentric beings are generally compounded of qualities which have little of *sterling* excellency to make up for the want of a polished and agreeable exterior. Let it then be remembered, that a desire to please is quite allowable, provided it be subservient to higher principles and aims. I would have you condescending to inferiors, kind and conciliatory towards equals, respectful and submissive to superiors, whether in age, rank, or station. Amidst the collisions and tumults of that busy world in which you have to move, civility and courtesy will not indeed always prove a barrier against ill treatment; but they will parry many a thrust, and blunt or divert the edge of many a keen weapon. It has been often remarked, that more than half of the miseries of life arise from petty instances of inattention and caprice, often repeated, rather than from criminal designs, or flagrant acts. The Chinese are so sensible of this, that at Pekin there is a court established for regulating the ceremonial of the empire; and a volume is published, which contains more than three thousand rules, for directing the behaviour of every rank, upon every occasion. I mention this curious fact, not that I conceive any benefit could be

expected from it, were such a law enacted among ourselves. "Human nature," observes Ely Bates, "is a Proteus, that cannot be held by any merely outward constraint; nothing short of a moral revolution, in which pride gives place to humility, and selfishness to benevolence, can produce a genuine and uniform civility of manners." But character, whether we consider its prime, or secondary qualities, does not invariably attract the approbation and esteem which are anticipated. I wish you to feel the importance of securing the confidence and attachment of the truly virtuous and respectable part of mankind; but to guard you against an excessive sensibility on this point. The favour and esteem of men, under certain limitations, may be sought, and even carefully preserved, when once acquired; yet they should be regarded, like the precious metals, as having rather an exchangeable than an intrinsic value, as desirable not simply in their possession, but in their use. "The Christian," observes Mr. Wilberforce, "in cultivating the desire of that honour which cometh from God, finds the most effectual means of bringing his mind into a proper temper, in what regards the love of human approbation." My dear friend, wouldst thou indeed reduce this affection under just control—*sursum corda!* Rise on the wings of contemplation, until the praises and the censures of men die away upon the ear, and the still small voice of conscience is no longer drowned in the din of the nether world. Here the sight is apt to be occupied with earthly objects, and the hearing to be engrossed with earthly sounds; but there thou shalt come within the view of that resplendent and incorruptible crown, which is held forth to thy acceptance in the realms

of light, and thine ear shall be regaled with heavenly melody. Here we dwell in a variable atmosphere; the prospect is at one time darkened with the gloom of disgrace, and at another, the eye is dazzled with the gleamings of glory; but when thou hast once ascended above this inconstant region, no storms agitate, no clouds obscure the air, and the lightnings play, and the thunders roll beneath.*

The reflections sometimes cast on the character of persons engaged in commercial affairs, by those who live in what is called a state of independence, or fill the learned professions, are, I am convinced, unmerited. "My latter years," says the pious Dr. Lucas, "have been spent mostly among the trading part of mankind; and I must do them the justice to acknowledge, that I have found more honour and gratitude, more clearness and integrity, amongst this sort of men, than I ever could amongst others whose quality and education raised my expectations higher." To this testimony may be added that of one of our most distinguished living writers. In the judgment of Dr. Chalmers, all the products of British genius, and all the trophies of British valor, have not thrown so fair a lustre on our country, as the honour and uprightness of British merchants.†

Had we the biography of men eminent in the commercial world, as amply written as that of

* See Wilberforce's Practical View of Christianity; a work which I recommend to your serious perusal.

† Dr. Chalmers's Discourses on Christianity, connected with commercial affairs, will amply repay the trouble of a perusal. Nor would I forget to recommend Dr. Lucas's Inquiry after Happiness, from which the above extract is taken. Every sentiment I do not approve, but it is a work of high value.

scholars and heroes, it would be peculiarly useful. We may refer to John Thornton, Esq. of Clapham, Joseph Williams of Kidderminster, whose valuable diary ought to be in every tradesman's hands, and the late excellent Joseph Hardcastle, Esq. of London. With the last-mentioned gentleman I had a slight acquaintance, and sometimes enjoyed his company. His high reputation in the commercial world, was at length the growth of almost half a century; during which it sustained no blemish, and will long be gratefully remembered. His eye beamed with benignity; in his conversation there was perfect ease and affability; and in his whole deportment, unaffected and unconscious dignity. The intelligent were attracted by his wisdom, the serious by his piety, the accomplished by his urbanity, and the young by his condescension.*

That you may imbibe the best principles, and follow the brightest examples, is the desire of your

Affectionate Father.

LETTER II.

FASHIONABLE AMUSEMENTS.

My dear Son,

In the opinion of many young people, all the time which can be spared and detached from business may, without blame or danger, be devoted to

* Bishop's Christian Memorials of the nineteenth century.

pleasure. This false notion not only lays them open to unnumbered temptations, but often hurries them to scenes of dissipation and folly. The toil and task of the day being finished, they fly to some promiscuous crowd, in search of diversion for the night. I hope the instructions and warnings you have received, not to mention the consequences of such a course, will suffice to guard you against the allurements which lead to it. None but a fool would consent to truck away gold for painted baubles; and can there be a more glaring and egregious folly, than for youth to give up the precious golden opportunities of improvement which they possess, for the toys and trifling gratifications of a vain world?

I am perfectly aware that the mind of one who for many successive hours each day, is tied to close and serious employments, needs to be relaxed and recruited. But no amusements are to be chosen for this end, which are unlawful, or have manifestly a bad tendency. Of this kind are all games of chance, which have a monied stake. They work up violent passions, and in many persons produce a species of infatuation, which hurries them blindly and impetuously onward into the gulf of ruin. But it is a fact, that many things really innocent in themselves, become injurious by excess. Time is one of the most valuable talents committed to our trust, and should therefore on no account be wasted. Let this precious article be so highly rated in your estimate, as not to be given up without some adequate return. The mother of the celebrated John Wesley, writing to her son, when he was at college, gave him the following wholesome counsel, which will bear to be applied in various situations. "What time is

in your own power, you may dispose of, nor are your rules so strict, as not to allow some diversions. I will tell you what method I used to observe when I was in my father's house, and perhaps had as little, if not less, liberty than you have now. I used to allow myself as much time for recreation, as I spent in private devotion; not that I always spent so much, yet so far I gave myself leave to go, but no farther."

The main design, however, of this letter is to touch on public amusements.

The race-ground, and the pugilistic ring, the favourite resorts of sharpers, profligates, and libertines, of every rank, exhibit such notorious violations of decency, such disgusting excesses and brutal cruelties, that a man of any delicacy, or even of humanity, cannot but shudder to hear them recited, much more to think of witnessing them. Persons must be some time schooled in vice, before they can find any pleasure in atrocities, the very existence of which stamps disgrace upon a civilized country.* But balls, routs, and

* The dismal effects of gaming might be illustrated by many examples.

A few years since, John Ardesoif, Esq. a young man of large fortune, passionately fond of cock-fighting, had a favourite cock, which had won him many profitable matches. The last bet he laid upon this cock he lost, which so enraged him, that in a fit of passion he thrust the bird into the fire. A delirious fever was the result of his rage and inebriety, which in three days put an end to his life at Tottenham, in Middlesex.

In the year 1820, a warrant having been issued against John Morley, the keeper of a gaming house in London, the officers saw a number of deluded young men, employed in trusty situations in the city, who, on seeing them, hastily retired. Many have been ruined at this scene of vice; and some, having had recourse to illegal means to make up their losses, perished ignominiously at the Old Bailey.

plays, though more refined, are scarcely less injurious. It is not my design to enter into any lengthened and minute discussion on these public amusements. The baneful effects which follow, when once a passion for them is created, seem to be generally admitted, at least in regard to that rank and station of life which you have to fill. Suppose any one to seek a place of high trust in some important office, or business, for another; what should we think, if the principal of the concern were addressed to this effect:—"Sir, the candidate whom I take the liberty to recommend is a man of promptitude, knowledge, and skill; of virtuous habits, and engaging manners; but, besides these ordinary qualities, he possesses accomplishments of a more rare and exalted kind. You will not find him a dull plodder, but one of the finest spirits of the age. He has long been accustomed to study, and enabled to catch with the utmost nicety all the variations of taste and fashion; in every gay circle he is the object of admiration and envy; he is also a proficient in the arts of gallantry, and in the profound mysteries of gaming. When his official duties are discharged, you will not find him moping at home over a book, like a monk or a Christian; but he will be constant, night after night, in his attendance at the theatre, the ball-room, or the card-party." Would such a recommendation as this be likely to succeed? Is there one of a thousand who would consent to engage such a candidate? Might we not expect that any man of sense and experience would instantly reply to an application of this kind;—The man you recommend is far too accomplished for my situation. He has too large a family to maintain; for, as Dr. Franklin has said, it costs more to keep one vice

than two children : how great must be his expense who has a whole family, or rather clamorous tribe of vices to feed. He would doubtless serve his own lusts better than me, and therefore I shall decline having any connexion with him.

Yet many, circumstanced as you are in business, persuade themselves, or are persuaded by their associates and juvenile friends, that theatrical and other entertainments, to a certain limit, are perfectly safe; that it is not the indulgence of this taste, but the excess of it, which merits and draws forth blame.

Some tell us, these public entertainments are even useful to the individual who frequents them, provided it be within the bounds of prudence. As those fruits and wines which are taken merely for gratification, have in certain instances proved conducive to health ; so they assure us, entertainments sought solely for pleasure have often been found a wholesome stimulus to the dormant powers of the mind. We must have something, say the advocates of the ball-room and play-house, to rouse and re-animate our drooping spirits, and quicken the sluggish current of dull life.

We admit, indeed, that certain portions, compounded of fiery ingredients, may operate as cordials, and that even poisons may be so mixed, as to exhilarate for a time ; but it is reasonable to ask, do they not evidently tend to sap and ruin the constitution ? Were the analogy here suggested, pursued and honestly applied, it is easy to see what must be the conclusion. The very pleas which are urged by many for venturing into the dazzling and delusive circle of fashionable dissipation, carry their own confutation, where reason is calmly heard, or virtue is truly respected. Mo-

rality is scarcely adverted to, but it is emotion; strong, engrossing, intense emotion, which is sought; and when this is found and felt, it is always of short continuance. The pleasure (if I may borrow an allusion from the schools) does not compensate for the vacuum which succeeds it; the delicious rapture is swallowed up in the depressing languor and misery which it brings. "I do not mean to argue the question on the ground of religion, but merely on that of present enjoyment. Look abroad, and see who are the people that complain of weariness, listlessness and dejection. You will not find them among the class that are overdone with work, but with pleasure. The natural and healthful fatigues of business may be recruited by simple and cheap gratifications; but a spirit worn down with the toils of amusement, requires pleasures of poignancy, varied, multiplied, stimulating!"

We must, however, in justice allow, that few attempt to beguile inexperienced youth into the vortex of public entertainments by pleading their utility; they generally rest on the loose ground of their harmlessness. And even in regard to this point, they are more disposed to deal in bold assertions or sly insinuations, than in arguments or facts. What harm, they ask, can there be in seeing a good play acted? It is an innocent and elegant entertainment, which the most creditable citizens frequently honour with their presence, and which none but rigid puritans, and wrong-headed enthusiasts, can censure. It were sufficient to oppose interrogatory to interrogatory, and assertion to assertion. Is there no harm in listening to all the ribaldry, profaneness, and blasphemy uttered on the stage? in witnessing scenes and actions,

which flush with crimson the cheek of modesty, and shock with horror the bosom of virtue and sensibility? in protracting the visit beyond the midnight-hour, while the farce succeeds the drama, and then pressing through crowds of prostitutes, black-guards, and bullies, all waiting and watching for their prey, where experience has taught them it is commonly to be found? It is not saying too much, to affirm, with that eminent prelate, Archbishop Tillotson, "That the play-house is the nursery of licentiousness and vice." Its scenes are gay and flowery, but, *anguis in herba*, or rather, a nest of serpents lie concealed, which have fire and fascination in their eyes, and death in their fangs. A few good sentiments and maxims may be sometimes heard there, but they only serve to gild and varnish an immense mass of evil. If the thousands and tens of thousands who have been betrayed into folly, wickedness and ruin, by the theatre, could be collectively viewed, and seriously contemplated, the yet uncontaminated youth would tremble to think of entering within its walls. But we may indeed be told, that all who go to see plays are not utterly undone. Granted; but if a few visit a country infected by the plague, without catching the contagion, or falling victims, it is still folly and rashness to run the hazard. Supposing that a young man should seek the diversion of theatrical representations, without forming any dangerous connexions, or profligate habits, is there no harm in exposing his health, wasting his money and time, enervating his intellectual, and perverting his moral powers?

The advocates of public amusements, while studying and labouring to inveigle the unwary, sometimes plead that they are not forbidden in the

Scriptures. This is the weakest of all arguments ever employed on this subject. If every form, into which vanity, folly, extravagance, ambition, avarice, envy, anger, lust, and rapacity, may break forth, had been specifically prohibited, the Bible would have been far more voluminous and prolix than the Chinese code of laws. The sacred writers lay down general principles, which inculcate purity of heart and conduct, sufficient when conscientiously applied, both to preserve us from moral evil, and lead us to all spiritual good, the seed and the substance of all real happiness. "Be not," says Paul, "conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your minds; that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Let these divine precepts be fairly construed, and faithfully applied, and many popular public entertainments must be wholly and for ever abandoned.

Those who defend the bloody and barbarous practice of duelling, or the horrid enormities of the *African Slave Trade*, have often asked their opponents to point out any express prohibition of them in the New Testament. Such persons might know, if they would candidly examine that sacred, inestimable volume, how emphatically all injustice, cruelty, revenge, and selfishness, are condemned, though it were impossible for every individual case to be particularly specified. The same argument, which admirers of the stage use to defend their favourite amusement, could be applied to the ancient gladiatorial sports of the Roman amphitheatre, or the modern bull-fights of Spain, or the still more inhuman and degrading

pugilistic contests now so prevalent in England. None of these are forbidden by name in the New Testament. But what is the main drift and design of the revelation of his will, which God has given us? Is it not to infuse the spirit of purity, rectitude, benevolence, and devotion? Will a young man find, that the same process which fits him to read with interest and profit the pages of inspired truth, prepares him to relish and enjoy the gaieties of the world? Or, when he comes exhausted from the maddening midnight revel, is he in a frame of mind to taste the pleasure of devotion and communion with God? Suppose him, in these circumstances, to be disposed, by previous habit, to look into his Bible, where we will imagine he finds the following graphic delineation of character: "The harp, and the viol, and the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands." Or, dipping into the New Testament, he reads, "That ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." How must he be affected by these and similar passages? Would they be congenial with his late pursuits, or his present feelings? Rather, would they not, if any sensibility and tenderness of conscience remained, pierce him with stings of remorse, and overwhelm him with confusion and horror?

Some endeavour to draw the young to theatrical representations, and similar amusements, by pretending that they thus give encouragement to genius, taste, and the fine arts. None, say they, can be the enemies of the muses and the graces, but gothic barbarians. Painting, poetry, and music have unquestionably their charms; but from

hence to deduce an argument for the defence of routs, balls, and plays, is like justifying the wasteful extravagance of the prodigal, by affirming that his wild and ruinous excesses encourage trade and commerce; a principle which, if followed out into all its consequences, might furnish a very convenient apology for robbers and incendiaries.

Whatever some philosophers have maintained to the contrary, there is a species of refinement which readily amalgamates with the most odious vice. "It might be shown," says Dr. Turnbull, "that a taste for beauty in the ingenious arts is so analogous to, and connected with, a good taste of beauty and harmony in moral conduct, that if one who hath the former is irregular and dissolute in his morals, he must be so in downright contradiction to the sole principle upon which his delight in the ingenious arts and works of taste is founded." Lord Kaimes, to the same effect, says, "Thus taste goes hand in hand with the moral sense, in their progress towards maturity; and they ripen equally by the same sort of culture." It would be a waste of time to attempt a refutation of this idle, romantic theory; nor can it stand a moment against the weight of overwhelming facts. Such ideas of *moral virtue*, it has been well observed, may remind us of the story of the blind man, who being asked what idea he had of scarlet colour, said he thought it resembled the sound of a trumpet.

After mentioning some of the most common pleas and apologies for public entertainments, I shall conclude this epistle by adverting to two circumstances, which, though before briefly touched, require to be rendered a little more prominent.

When a youth of virtuous and religious habits

settles in the metropolis, or in any of our populous towns, he will rarely be solicited, in the first instance, to visit the most infamous and revolting resorts of profligacy. The very proposal would offer too rude a shock to all his best principles and best feelings. Some entertainment is therefore recommended, which presents a decent and plausible aspect, and has gained the suffrage and countenance of persons who sustain an amiable and respectable character. Remember, my dear boy, the maxim of Seneca: "*Venenum in auro bibitur,*" Poison is usually drank out of a golden cup. There is often the least to excite alarm, where there is most danger, As to following in the track and train of those who are called and thought *respectable*, a little caution may be requisite. *Respect*, itself, is often derived from very suspicious sources. Some owe it, as Lord Bacon intimates, to the smile of Lady Fortune, and her two daughters, Independence and Authority. Others gain it on account of superior talents, highly cultivated indeed, but not combined with elevated aims and pure motives; in knowledge resembling the winged angels of heaven, in affection the grovelling worms of earth; while not a few have their title to it drawn from a punctilious observance of forms, and a wary solicitude to keep up appearances.

> "Virtue they deem too painful an endeavour,
> Content to dwell in decencies forever."

Now it may be fairly asked, how can those persons give a sanction of any weight to questionable pursuits and pleasures, whose own characters are of so frail a structure, or so dubious a cast? An indulgent courtesy may term them *respectable*, but

the patent which gives the flattering designation will not bear a very rigid scrutiny.

The other circumstance which I would notice, is, the importunity with which you may be solicited to yield a *single compliance*, by way of experiment, with the assurance that if you disapprove or dislike your entertainment, you may afterwards decline it. This is a manœuvre which carries a plausible exterior, and too often is played off with success, when other stratagems have failed. "Accompany us but once," they will say, "to the fashionable assembly, to see with your own eyes, and hear with your own ears; spend a single night at the theatre, when one of the best plays happens to be acted, and we will then trouble you with no more entreaties." I hope you know too well the drift of such importunity, to yield to it. Diogenes is said to have recommended a habit of courage, rather than caution, of bearing, rather than forbearing; a habit which could check the sallies of the soul on the steepest precipice, and make it, like a well-broke horse, stop and turn at the shortest warning. But you follow the directions of a wiser and better master than the Grecian cynic. Made acquainted, in some measure, with the deceitfulness of sin, and the treachery of the human heart, you will not venture, I trust, to the edge of the precipice or pit-fall. Such daring is the magnanimity of a fool, not of a wise man. Fortify courage with the rampart of piety and prudence. Advance not within the verge of temptation and danger. The spells of enchantment, scattered over the gay walks of fashion and folly, are never felt with complete impunity. Your safety, your peace, your purity, require you to keep at a due distance from them. There should be a broad

and marked line of separation, flanked with watch-towers and centinels. And remember, if once lured by artifice, or hurried by passion, you venture to transgress that line, you would be exposed to all the power and subtilty of the enemy. And who can say, how your senses may be dazzled and bewildered, how your understanding may be darkened and deluded, how your imagination may be roused and inflamed, how your conscience may be burdened or benumbed? Abstain, then, from all appearance of evil. Flee youthful lusts, but follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Your affectionate Father.

LETTER III.

ON COMPANY.

My dear Son,

That social principle which prompts us to seek, and prepares us to enjoy, the pleasures of friendship, was planted in our nature for the wisest purposes; and we cannot but observe, that the circumstances which attend its development, and the means which regulate its operation and influence, are, in a moral point of view, of the highest importance. At every period of life, the mind is susceptible of strong and deep impressions from those with whom we have frequent and intimate intercourse; but particularly in the plastic and ductile days of youth. Most persons are obviously,

in a great measure, what the society in which they have lived has made them. They have hence, like metal cast into a mould, taken the form, stamp, and lineaments, of their character. It ceases therefore to be wonderful, that conscientious teachers and Christian parents, should ever have felt great solicitude to guard their pupils and children from danger on this point, and guide their judgment by the dictates of prudence and experience. The few hints which I shall give you in this letter will be little more than the repetition of what, in detached portions, you have often heard from my lips; nor will this circumstance diminish, but rather increase their power to interest your mind. We have only one child now under the parental roof, and your dear mother and myself often speak of the rest, who are scattered in different places, and engaged in different employments, with a tender and affectionate anxiety. Often do we recall to mind the years and incidents of your childhood, and unfeignedly bless God for all his mercies to us and our offspring. I trust you and your brothers, who are equally prominent in my view while I commit to writing these counsels and advices, will ever recollect with gratitude and delight, the early instructions and endearments of home.

Beware, my son, of spending either too much or too little of your time in company. The well-known maxim of the classic poet, *Virtus est medium vitiorum, et utrinque reductum*—Virtue is the middle between two vices, and equally removed from each extreme—is here justly applicable. While business claims the greatest part of the day, the few hours that remain are a treasure which you should carefully keep, and vigilantly improve.

Oppose encroachment, repel intrusion. An easy facility of yielding too readily to the attractions of company is generally injurious, even in reference to secular affairs. The habits essential to success in trade are by this means impaired, and often destroyed. Mr. Whitefield, therefore, used in the pulpit, when admonishing young men on this point, to say, "Beware of being *golden* apprentices, *silver* journeymen, and *copper* masters." Prize, I beseech you, your time, and guard it against those plunderers, who would steal it away, and never make any compensation for the theft. Let neither the sturdy and audacious, nor the crafty and insinuating, break in upon your sacred leisure. "No man," says Bishop Taylor, "can be provident of his time, that is not prudent in the choice of his company: and if one of the speakers be vain, tedious, and trifling, he that hears, and he that answers are both equal losers of their time."

Few persons have attained eminence in any art or profession, or excellence in the practice of moral virtue, without resolution to fence in, and turn to good account, their spare hours. The celebrated Mrs. Astell, whose scientific and literary productions raised her to notice and distinction, was a remarkable example of diligence; and it may deserve to be here mentioned, that she valued her time too much to suffer it to be interrupted by idle and frivolous visiters; for though she had not learned the modern refinement of dictating lies to her servants, she would often prevent such intruders as she saw them approach, by jestingly saying from her window, "Mrs. Astell is not at home." It might have been still better, if, instead of jesting for such a purpose, she had seriously and in earnest declared herself to be engaged. Let

those stores of information, which a judicious selection of books cannot fail to supply, be laid up in your mind; for you may in this manner make them your own, and they will furnish both materials to employ reflection, and subjects to enrich discourse. Lord Bacon has said, "Reading makes a full man; conversation a ready man; and writing an exact man." Have respect to this aphorism in all its parts, and maintain them in their due proportions. Many young people are sufficiently prompt and ready to communicate the few ideas they possess; but their knowledge is scanty, their crude notions are poured forth rashly, and they neither aim at increasing their mental resources, nor at arranging and disposing them with a view to accuracy and use. The effect likely to be produced upon such persons by frequently hastening into promiscuous company, we may with confidence affirm will be very injurious. "The taste of general society," says Mrs. More, "is not favourable to improvement. The seriousness with which the most frivolous subjects are agitated, and the levity with which the most serious are despatched, bear a pretty exact proportion to each other."*

* After quoting the words of the excellent Mrs. More, I cannot resist the desire of giving one short passage from the pen of another valuable female writer, to whom the rising generation is much indebted, the late Miss Jane Taylor. "It is to little purpose to spend the morning in useful pursuits, if in the evening the thoughts are always to be dissipated and distracted in a mixed company. Associating with agreeable friends, is, of all *recreations*, the most delightful; but when from its frequency it becomes a sort of business rather than a recreation, the good is overbalanced by a thousand evils: and if this be the case even with improving society, what must be the effect of incessant visiting with the giddy, volatile, and dissipated;

Do I then recommend solitude and seclusion? Far from it; for I conceive there are evils in this extreme as well as the opposite, though they are not so common. Anthony Magliabechi used to read, write, eat, drink, and sleep, in his library, amidst heaps of loose papers and dusty volumes; and Varillas, another intense student, made it matter of boasting, that he had not dined from home for more than thirty years. Perhaps one young man in ten thousand may become a bookish recluse, but we have no reason to fear that such prodigies will ever multiply and abound. Yet, little danger as there is on this ground, I should be sorry to see any of my children or friends affected by it. By company, the advantages derived from other sources are turned to good account. A close man is like a man unknown. Thoughts, like waters, are best in a running stream.

> "Speech ventilates our intellectual fire;
> Speech burnishes our mental magazine,
> Brightens for ornament, and whets for use."

It has been often remarked, that the ripe scholar, or deep thinker, devoted almost exclusively to study, is seldom either agreeable or happy in mixed company. "The conversation," says Dugald Stewart, "which pleases generally, must unite the recommendation of quickness, of ease, and of variety: and in all these three respects, that of the philosopher is apt to be deficient. It is deficient in quickness, because his ideas are

or with gossiping and censorious acquaintances? It is, then, to *evenings at home* that we more particularly refer, as seasons capable of affording true pleasure and improvement." The life of the writer furnishes the best comment to this passage.

connected by relations, which occur only to an attentive and collected mind. It is deficient in ease, because the relations are not the casual and obvious ones, by which ideas are associated in ordinary memories; but the slow discoveries of patient and often painful exertion. Even the anecdotes which the philosopher has collected, however agreeable they may be in themselves, are seldom introduced by him in conversation with that unstudied but happy propriety, which we admire in the men whose facts are not referred to general principles, but are suggested to their recollection by the familiar topics and occurrences of life."

But to choose the *right kind* of company is a matter of much more difficulty and importance, than to regulate the proportion of time which social intercourse demands. The latter may exercise and mark prudence; the former discovers and affects principle. Whatever would lead to cold reserve on the one hand, or wearisome loquacity on the other, is certainly to be avoided; but loose and immoral connexions ought to be both avoided and abhorred. It has become a fashion of late years, for young people to keep what is called an *album*, or blank book, in which individuals distinguished for talent or character are desired to write some sentiment, maxim, monitory hint, or sage counsel, as a permanent memorial. And what should we think of the youth, who, having a valuable repository of this kind, should present the book to lewd and vicious people, to inscribe whatever they thought proper? A few vile passages, inserted by such hands, would entirely spoil the selection. We are hence furnished with a fit illustration, which you may apply. Every young

person should regard the *mind* as an *album*, which is to be filled and kept with the utmost care. Let nothing be written on its blank pages which can offend the eye of delicacy and purity. I feel confident, my dear boy, that you would instantly recoil from any proposal to mix with men of base and profligate character. Excess and debauchery, in their last stages, and lowest depths of degradation, can excite no feeling but disgust. *Nemo repente fuit turpissimus:*—No man ever suddenly rose to the summit of criminality. But there are many persons exempt from gross vice, who are not suitable companions; persons who would reprobate any project for engaging in wanton and unlawful intrigues, yet speak of them with evident indications of pleasure; who stigmatize *gaming* as ruinous, yet like to spend night after night at the card-table; who study to escape the disgrace of low intemperance, yet yield up themselves up to a measured sensual indulgence. Habits of this kind are the more dangerous, when graced with amiable dispositions and elegant manners; for we cannot allow the justice of Mr. Burke's courtly maxim, "that vice loses half its evil by losing all its grossness." It were more correct to assert, that the intrinsic evil of vice is every where and always the same; but its power of doing mischief is doubled by certain arts and modes of refinement, which are too often employed. If, then, you would not be absorbed in the vortex of dissipation, keep aloof from the currents and streams which lead to it. I could easily accompany these cautions with many examples, but one shall for the present suffice. Some years ago, I knew a young man who set out in business with very promising prospects of success. His connexious were re-

spectable, his character stood high, and besides his thorough knowledge of trade and commerce, he gained credit and esteem by the fairness and urbanity which marked all his dealings. For about five years he went on prosperously, but he then began to spend two or three evenings every week with jovial companions. These associates gradually drew him into habits of intemperance; his business was neglected; debts and embarrassments thickened upon him; and though his friends used every means to reclaim him, he plunged both himself and his rising family in the gulf of bankruptcy and ruin. How often does a fondness for company lead to drunkenness, deep play, and all those desperate courses which issue in poverty, ignominy, distraction and anguish! How often, from this sole cause, do we behold the bright morning of life, which opened with so fine a lustre, overcast by stormy clouds; and the fair prospect, which promised so rich a harvest, withered and destroyed by a fatal blight!

But it is not enough to warn you against the society of men who disguise vice under a decent veil. Many young people are unfit companions, not so much from any *positive*, as from their *negative* qualities. There is no taint of impurity in their language, no turn for extravagance, or even measured and refined intemperance, in their conduct; but we soon perceive a total destitution, a deplorable want of every intellectual and moral excellence. All around is a dreary waste of sterility and barrenness. They have neither information to give, nor a preparation of mind to receive with pleasure that which others may be able and willing to impart. Hence their discourse is trite, empty, insipid, and tiresome; and the moment

any subject of importance or real interest is started, they find themselves beyond their latitude, as if suddenly cast among foreigners, whose language they could not understand.

I wish your companions to be such in age, situation, character and principles, as may most effectually conduce to your improvement. I know that some advise young men to associate chiefly with those who are above them in years and in attainments; but, though many advantages may result from such intercourse, it fairly admits a question, whether they are not counterbalanced by effects of an unfavourable kind. Persons so unequally gifted can seldom feel a mutual interest, or perfect freedom; and the habit of yielding a constant assent to our superiors, however pleasing as the indication of modesty, is apt to weaken the basis and the bonds of that independence and decision of character, which I have so frequently recommended.

This is, perhaps, the proper place to answer a question which you lately proposed to me, respecting the expediency of attending meetings whose professed object is debate. It is an inquiry, which calls for some discrimination. The debating societies so common in the metropolis, and in most of our large cities and towns, are, in my opinion, highly objectionable. If a few young men, of unblemished character, choose to meet and discuss literary and useful subjects, I see nothing wrong in the thing itself, provided it is rightly conducted. The faculties of the mind, and the powers of speech, are called into exercise; ideas and illustrations, facts and arguments, are drawn forth from various sources, and considerable advantage may be gained. But even here, I

cannot withhold a word of admonition. Take heed that the company be select, that the topics for discussion be within a limited range, neither rising too high, nor sinking too low; that the times of meeting be not unseasonable, nor very frequently recurring.

But to return from this digression, to the point of social intercourse in general. I have before said, that in our days, youth are, for the most part, pushed forward rather too early and eagerly into company. Parents seem anxious to animate and embolden their children, urging, but not guiding their career, to raise them to some station of consequence, or some sphere of secular advantage; and to secure the accomplishment of these ends it is thought absolutely necessary that they should *know the world.* This perverted phrase has led myriads to perdition. There is a sense, indeed, in which we cannot too soon or too well know the world, but not by being practically initiated into its follies, tricks, and villanies. The less knowledge you have of the world, in this sense, the better. "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

> "The world's a school
> Of wrong, and what proficients swarm around!
> We must or imitate or disapprove;
> Must list as their accomplices or foes;
> That stains our innocence, this wounds our peace."

Admitting, however, as I have done, that company is necessary for youth, it is a matter of vast importance to select suitable associates, and to turn your intercourse to advantage. Let nothing tempt you either to utter or applaud the slightest violations of truth and decency, whatever sprightliness and ingenuity they may display. Wit, if well-

timed and chastened, gives an agreeable seasoning to conversation; but let bitter, biting sarcasm be wholly discarded, and let ridicule in any form be very sparingly and cautiously used. The following short rules were given by the celebrated Sir Isaac Newton.

1. "When you enter into company, be careful to observe the dispositions of those among whom you are.

2. "Behave yourself in such an affable manner, that you may engage them to deliver their sentiments freely.

3. "Never discourse by question or doubt; you will gain little advantage by appearing either wiser or more ignorant than the rest of the company."

Concise precepts of this kind, like the pithy sayings of the ancient sages, need be qualified and viewed in their true bearings, lest they be misapplied. The last of the three, above repeated, may be useful to repress an inquisitive spirit, when it verges to captiousness; but young people may very laudably ask questions for information. Nor ought your concern to be confined to your own improvement. The ties and endearments of social life are maintained by reciprocal benefits. When I was about eighteen years old, a young man visited the family in which I lived, whose company I found of great use to me. He had been well educated, was under the influence of true religion, and had a pleasing charm in his manners, which rendered his conversation peculiarly interesting. His stay with us was but a few weeks, yet I derived so much advantage from his society, that the recollection of that visit will, I am sure, be never erased from the tablet of my memory.

The design of every Christian should be, daily to receive and do good. And the degree of good done in conversation, cannot be measured and ascertained by any direct and palpable means. It does not depend wholly on the quantity of ideas and facts communicated, or the force and conclusiveness of arguments advanced, or the brilliance and variety, the novelty and pertinence of the illustrations and anecdotes adduced. There is a spirit of freedom, generosity, and kindness, which reproduces itself, and spreads a salutary influence in every direction. Without this fine, ethereal spirit, social intercourse is sure either to become flat and insipid, or fierce and virulent.

You will meet with a variety of tempers and dispositions among your friends and acquaintance; you will have mistakes to remove, irritations to allay, prejudices to combat, and antipathies to soften. Now you need have your mind imbued with the doctrine of Christianity, and with that wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. When in this spirit we converse with our friends or fellow-men, there is some probability of doing them good.

Dr. Dwight mentions a man of his acquaintance, of a vehement temper, who had a dispute with a friend, a professor of religion. He met so much frankness, humility, and kindness, in his Christian friend, that on returning home, he said to himself, "There must be something more in religion than I have hitherto suspected. Were any one to address me in the tone of haughtiness and provocation with which I accosted my friend this evening, it would be impossible for me to preserve

the equanimity of which I have been a witness. There is something in *this man's* disposition which is not in *mine*. There is something in the religion which he professes, and which I am forced to believe he feels; something which makes him so superior, so much better, so much more amiable than I can pretend to be. The subject strikes me in a manner to which I have hitherto been a stranger. It is high time to examine it more thoroughly, with more candour, and with greater solicitude also, than I have done hitherto." From this incident, a train of thoughts and emotions commenced in the mind of this man, which terminated in his profession of the Christian religion; his relinquishment of the business in which he was engaged; and his consecration of himself to the ministry of the gospel.

Though there should be few instances of usefulness so palpable as that which has just been related, it is impossible to calculate how much good a word in season may do. At any rate, it should be your aim, and the aim of every follower and servant of Christ, to spread the savour of his knowledge and truth, and the benign influence of genuine piety, as diffusely as possible. He who sincerely desires and endeavours to do good to those with whom he converses, will seldom long want the opportunity or the power. The substance of what relates to the manner and disposition required in social intercourse, is given in the following exquisite passage from the pen of Dr. Watts:—"Among all the accomplishments of youth, there is none preferable to a decent and agreeable behaviour among men, a modest freedom of speech, a soft and elegant manner of address, a graceful and lovely deportment, a cheerful

gravity and good humour, with a mind appearing ever serene under the ruffling accidents of human life. Add to this, a pleasing solemnity of reverence, when the discourse turns upon any thing sacred and divine; a becoming neglect of injuries, a hatred of calumny and slander, a habit of speaking well of others, a pleasing benevolence, and readiness to do good to mankind, a special compassion to the miserable, with an air and countenance in a natural and unaffected manner, expressive of all these excellent qualifications."

Your affectionate Father.

LETTER IV.

MANNER OF SPENDING THE SABBATH.

My dear Son,

So much of your happiness and usefulness depends on a due estimate and right improvement of our time, that I cannot forbear to reiterate my advices and admonitions on this point. Oh! may your mind be deeply impressed with the worth and importance of a talent, which the great Lord of all commands us diligently and conscientiously to occupy *till he come*. Every hour and every moment is more precious than the gold of Peru, or the gems of Golconda. Wealth, property, and credit, when they are lost, may be recovered; but time, once squandered away, can *never, never* be restored. And yet, strange to say, there is no species of prodigal waste so common, so little fear-

ed, and so rashly incurred. We are influence by probability on other subjects of loss and gain but demonstration in this matter often leaves u unmoved.

But while you ought to set a high value on *a your time*, recollect that there is *one day* in seven which bears a peculiar stamp of sanctity. "Th Sabbath was made for man," was appointed to pro mote his present and everlasting welfare. Som rigid austerities were connected with the institu tion under the Mosaic economy, and others wer superinduced by the blind zeal and stiff formalit of the Jews; but these being all removed by ou Lord and Saviour, we are to consider the grea original ends which it was designed to answer The command to hallow the seventh day wa written, with the other precepts of the moral law upon tables of stone on Mount Sinai. The cere monies and ritual services of the old dispensation as being of a nature purely figurative, and o course temporary, are now abolished: but th whole decalogue remains, and ever must remain in full force. He who has the Bible in his hands and a belief of that blessed book in his heart, wi never consent to nullify or neglect any of thos requirements which are of a moral and spiritua nature, and which must therefore necessarily con tinue unchanged through each succeeding age.*

* Dr. Paley maintains that the Sabbath was an institu tion of a ceremonial nature, and intended only for th Jews. You may see the arguments adduced by him, ver fully and satisfactorily answered in the fourth volume Dwight's System of Theology. Dr. Chalmers has also beautiful sermon on this subject, in a volume recent published by him. The writings of Paley, on topics con nected with the outworks of religion, are truly valuable but Dwight, Chalmers, and Gisborne, are far better guid to conduct you into the sanctuary.

The Sabbath was appropriated for the consideration of the great truths, the performance of the solemn duties, and the enjoyment of the exalted privileges of pure and undefiled religion. If this statement be just, is it not awfully perverted and profaned even by the majority of those who bear the Christian name? The fact is notorious, and the consequences have been often particularly enumerated and described. In the opulent and dissipated city where your lot is cast, how many thousands of young people have begun that career which has terminated in infamy and ruin, by first breaking the sabbath? Taught while at home to reverence the sacred day, and regularly attend the house of God, it was not, perhaps, without many struggles, and some painful feelings and reflections, that these early habits were laid aside. But they yielded to the persuasion of their fascinating companions, and the Sunday-party was formed for an excursion of pleasure; one engagement of this kind made way for another and another, till the remonstrances and oppositions of conscience were silenced and subdued. They then began to excuse and defend practices, which are directly repugnant both to the letter and spirit of Christianity. "We are chained to the toils and fatigues of business all the week; why should we not recruit our health and spirits by a little innocent and cheerful relaxation on the only day which gives us an opportunity? Our friends and associates are highly respectable, and exceedingly kind and agreeable; why then may we not partake with them of a Sunday dinner, join them in a visit to the tea-garden or the tavern, or now and then spend a pleasant morning on board the sailing yacht, or steam-boat?" Such are the reasonings,

or rather excuses, generally employed to apologize for the profanation of the Sabbath. In reference to this mode of treating the subject, the poet's words are truly applicable.

> "As creeping ivy clings to wood or stone,
> Yet hides the ruin that it feeds upon;
> So sophistry cleaves close to, and protects,
> Sin's rotten trunk, concealing its defects."

Let me entreat you, my son, to guard against such flattering delusions. Venture not even once upon those Sunday rambles and revels, in which vice diffuses its baneful influence, under the form and guise of pleasure. Suffer not the dictates of judgment and of conscience, in a single instance, to be overborne by the soft and deceitful insinuations of fancy, folly, passion, and persuasion.

Let the Lord's day be marked out and fenced off as sacred time, upon which secular affairs and engagements must not encroach. Works of necessity and mercy are indeed allowed; but this very exception ought to be construed with a vigilant and cautious, not a lax and latitudinarian spirit. To read newspapers, to post books, to write letters, and undertake journeys on business, under the pretence that urgent and pressing calls render such things indispensable, and therefore proper, is to break down every barrier which preserves the sacredness of the day! I hope neither the authority nor the example of others, will have weight enough to draw you into engagements and snares of this kind. You cannot serve God and mammon. There is an irreconcileable opposition in their claims, and it should never be a question which ought to be preferred.

That the Sabbath may be spent profitably, make

it a point to rise early, and devote the prime of the day to meditation and the perusal of the Scriptures. My advice is, that the Bible be your chief and almost sole book on the Sabbath. Be not content with glancing over a psalm, or a short chapter, in the morning and the evening, but take such a portion of the sacred volume, as will open an ample field to the mind, and explore it with care and attention. By proceeding in this manner, you will give to the Bible the place and pre-eminence which it justly claims, and gain an intimate acquaintance with its facts, doctrines, warnings, and promises. You have no cause to fear that your labour will be lost, for this divine repository of truth and knowledge is a mine which cannot be exhausted. "Daily experience," said the pious Dr. Doddridge, "convinces me more and more, that as a thousand charms discover themselves in the works of nature, when attentively viewed with glasses, which had escaped the naked eye, so our admiration of the Holy Scriptures will rise in proportion to the accuracy with which they are studied." It is surprising that some religious families should so strangely neglect the sacred Bible. Even on the Lord's day, essays, tracts, sermons, hymns, catechisms, and sketches of biography, are put into the hands of the young people; but the book written by inspiration, the revealed and acknowledged will of God, is seldom opened, never diligently perused. Yet the mere reading of the Scriptures themselves will be of little use, unless the mind dwell in serious and sedate reflection, on the wholesome and momentous truths which they contain. Franke, Horne, Bickersteth, Henry, Scott, and other valuable writers, may lend help to the understanding in this employment; but your

own faculties must be put forth. Those who do not closely think and fervently pray, may travel over the sacred ground of revelation in the length thereof, and the breadth thereof, with enlightened guides and judicious commentators, and yet gather little fruit of solid advantage. Let then the early part of the Sabbath be consecrated to the devout exercises of the closet. *There* commune with your own heart, and with your God. *There* search the Scriptures, that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *There* summon your scattered thoughts, your roving affections, and all your powers, to the service of that Being, whose piercing eye seeth us in secret, and whose liberal hand, according to his promise, rewardeth us openly. After the duties of the closet, the offerings presented at the family altar demand your attention. I consider these of high moment, but shall not here enlarge upon them.

From childhood you have been taught to frequent and honour the house of God. Many, doubtless, are drawn thither by mere custom or constraint, and some by curiosity, vanity, and a thirst for that entertainment which the eloquence of the pulpit is capable of affording. When you repair to the sanctuary, reflect on the nature and design of public worship. Prayer, thanksgiving, and adoration, are certainly among the sweetest and sublimest exercises and acts, in which the spirit of man can be engaged. Be it ever your aim and desire, and strenuous endeavour, to enter upon these duties with a mind calm and collected, serene and vigilant, exquisitely alive to the honour of God, and the interests of eternity. It is possible to maintain a grave and decorous deportment, in the midst of

a Christian congregation, in the total absence of all those sentiments which constitute genuine devotion. But at best, it is a poor thing to have the form of godliness and be destitute of its power. When the heart is melted in penitence at the recollection and confession of past sins, warmed with gratitude under a sense of countless mercies, filled with strong faith in the divine promises, elevated and cheered with lively hope of future eternal felicity; O how mean and contemptible do the highest dignities and delights of the world then appear! "Secret prayer, like the melody of one sweet-toned voice stealing upon the ear, gently wafts the soul to heaven; social worship, as a full chorus of harmonized sounds, pierces the sky, and raises a great multitude of kindred spirits to the bright regions of everlasting love, and places them together before the throne of God."* Happy employment! What Christian in these circumstances has not often exclaimed, "Lord, it is good to be here!" The believing soul thus prepared, in the assembly of the saints and the services of Zion, breathes its own element, feeds upon the hidden manna, and drinks delicious draughts from that river which makes glad the city of our God. Yet these pleasures of piety exhilarate the mind, without exhausting its strength, or dissipating its powers; for a deep solemnity shades the light, which breaks upon the understanding, and chastens the ardour which glows in the heart.

When you sit under the ministry of the word, do not, I entreat you, hear as a critic, to pass your judgment upon the preacher, but as a Christian to gain instruction and edification. A fastidious taste and a captious spirit, are the bane of thou-

* Dr. Hunter.

sands in that metropolis, where some attractive novelty, or popular idol, is always rising to allure the curious, the restless, and the volatile. Be on your watch against this temptation.

Let the evening of the Lord's day correspond with the tenor of its preceding hours, duties, and solemnities. Do not hurry from the sanctuary of God into company and conversation, which have no savour of spirituality; but on the contrary, are brim-full of the world. Withdraw from the crowd, whose din and glare tend to distract and desecrate the devout mind. Regard every secular concern, whether of the lighter or graver kind, as an intruder, not to be admitted or countenanced at this season. You will then be prepared to command your own thoughts, to elevate your affections, to exercise and improve your Christian graces, and to bend every faculty and power, with intense and undivided solicitude, to advance and promote your eternal interests.

We have reason to believe, that many who hear the word with some degree of present pleasure, lose all the real profit and advantage which might be gained, for want of due subsequent reflection. They admire, and at times feel the discourses of the pastor, whose stated ministry they attend; but take no pains afterward to condense the matter of them, to connect the trains of reasoning in their own minds, and bring home the force and pathos of warm and vigorous exhortation to their own hearts. It has been thought a high point of mental dignity and independence, that Sir Thomas More being sent for by the king, when he was engaged in public prayers, should return an answer, "That he would wait upon him when he had performed his service to the King of kings." Yet

this celebrated statesman was a rigid bigot of popery. Superstition often appears more punctilious and strict in the public forms of religion, than rational and genuine piety. Popish zealots in Italy and Spain, even at this day, cannot easily be prevailed on to omit bowing the knee and muttering their prayers, but are quite ready, as soon as the ceremony is over, to hurry immediately from the chapel to the play or puppet-show. True religion is not a few splendid patches on a coarse ground, it is uniform and consistent; not coloured on the outside, but inwoven in the whole texture of the piece. As I have advised you to meditate and pray before you enter the house of God, and hear the glad tidings of salvation, I would with equal earnestness urge you to *follow* every public service, with these sacred and salutary exercises of private devotion. They will enlarge and consolidate your acquisitions of Scripture knowledge, deepen those traces on the tablet of memory, which, without some effort and precaution, are apt to fade fast away, give practical lessons their proper place and efficient power in the conscience, and diffuse an ineffable serenity and sweetness over the whole soul.

There is one point which must not be omitted —I mean the proportion of the sacred day to be employed in works of charity. Many pious young people take a pleasure in the tuition and management of Sabbath Schools; and as the evil prevented and the good communicated by this species of Christian benevolence are beyond the power of calculation, I hope you will be ready cheerfully to lend your assistance in this humble, yet truly honourable and useful work. It demands, indeed, self-denial, circumspection, diligence, zeal blend-

ed with meekness, and firmness softened by affection; but these are qualities which the religion of Jesus calls forth, and requires to be daily exercised.* Sabbath School teachers are a class of labourers in the field of moral and religious culture, to whose gratuitous, patient, and persevering efforts society at large is deeply indebted. But what is of still more importance, many children of the poor are by these commendable exertions snatched from ignorance and vice, enriched with the knowledge, and trained in the fear of God, and are thus prepared for usefulness in this life, and eternal happiness in the life to come.

Another exercise of charity, which may well claim an hour of the Sabbath, is visiting the sick and afflicted. When opportunity offers, let not this duty be declined as irksome; for experience has proved, that it is one of the ways in which we give and receive advantage, in which we bless and are blessed. That excellent young man, the late Walter Venning, did not find his mercantile employment a bar to these self-denying exercises of

* "Be not high-minded," says St. Paul, "but condescend to men of low estate." I know not how the lovely and attractive virtue of Christian condescension can be better manifested, than in giving instruction to the poor. A clergyman some time ago inserted a piece in the Christian Observer, in which he says, "I have several young noblemen under my care, who courteously attend a Sabbath School to teach the children." Facts of this kind are truly worthy of record, and are to be numbered among the most pleasing signs of the times. Can there be a better link or tie to connect the highest and the lowest classes, than the bond of benevolence? Can there be a more engaging sight than to behold persons, respectable both in circumstances and in character, each surrounded with a circle of interesting young creatures, drawn from the neighbouring cottages?

benevolence. He spent much time in praying and conversing with the poor, the sick, and the dying, in crowded alleys and courts of the metropolis. He seemed to bid fair, by treading in the steps of the illustrious Howard, to pursue a career of philanthropy, equally honourable and useful; but was cut off in the morning of life.

Such are the duties of the Sabbath. "Surely," says Mr. Wilberforce, "an entire day should not seem long amidst these various employments. It may well be deemed a privilege, thus to spend it in the more immediate presence of our heavenly Father, in the exercise of humble adoration and grateful homage, of benevolent, and domestic, and social feelings, and of all the best affections of our nature, prompted by their true motives, conversant about their proper objects, and directed to their noblest end; all sorrows mitigated, all cares suspended, all fears repressed, every angry emotion softened, every envious, or revengeful, or malignant passion expelled; and the bosom thus quieted, purified, enlarged, and ennobled, partaking almost of a measure of heavenly happiness, and become for a while the seat of love, and joy, and confidence, and harmony."

The counsel I have given, with reference to the manner of spending the Sabbath, might be strengthened by many examples, but I shall only mention two or three. The celebrated Sir Matthew Hale, equally distinguished for his integrity as a judge, and his piety as a Christian, has left a remarkable testimony recorded on this subject. In the advice addressed to his children, he assures them, that he had by long experience proved, that the religious observance of the Sabbath had brought a blessing upon all the rest of his time. I shall

not here recite his words, for they have been so frequently quoted, that I doubt not you have somewhere seen them.

The late excellent Christian, F. Gellert, amidst his many arduous duties and engagements, was very particular in observing the Sabbath, and laid great stress on this in the instructions he gave. "For on that day," said he, "to withdraw ourselves from all earthly occupations, to make a serious examination of our hearts, to raise them to heaven, to nourish them with the truths founded on faith, is to fortify them for the whole week, and to prepare ourselves for the duties of our calling. Amidst the tumults of the world, and the occupations of life, we too easily lose the sentiment of our weakness and misery, if we do not set apart a portion of our time for meditating on our insufficiency, and on the power and goodness of God; on our nothingness, and on his greatness. The better your dispositions, the more active your zeal in discharging your duties, the more secure you may think your progress in virtue; the more reason will you have to fear the surprises of spiritual pride. Consecrate, therefore, the Lord's day to acts of humility. Impress your hearts deeply with the meditation of this great truth; that your existence, your felicity, or your misery, your faith, your piety, are entirely and wholly dependent on the Supreme Being. Entertain a deep sense of the goodness of God, and of your own weakness. Awaken your mind to the sense of God's mercies; enjoy the conversation of your pious friends; rejoice in the felicity which is their portion, in the beauties and in the wonders of nature."

The following account of a Christian family

spending the Sabbath, from Mr. Gilpin's memoir of his son, has been justly admired.

"Every day was a day of tranquil satisfaction, in which we had little to wish, and much to enjoy; but the Sabbath presented us with peculiar consolations. We saluted every return of that holy day with undissembled joy, cheerfully laying aside all our usual studies and employments, except such as had a manifest tendency, either to enlarge our acquaintance with, or to advance our preparation for, the kingdom of God. It was a day truly honourable in our eyes, and marked as a season of spiritual delights. Its various exercies, whether public or private, produced an exhilarating effect upon our minds, and never failed to set us some paces nearer the object of our supreme desires. It was a kind of transfiguration-day, shedding a mild glory upon every creature, and enabling us to view the concerns of time in connexion with those of eternity. Through all its happy hours, we sat as on the holy mount, looking backward with gratitude, and forward with confidence; taking sweet counsel together for the advancement of our highest interests, and scarcely considering ourselves inhabitants of this lower world. The company of even our most intimate friends, on these occasions, would have rendered our intercourse with each other more reserved, and our pleasures proportionably less lively: but, unrestrained by the presence of witnesses, we gave an unlimited indulgence to all our affectionate and devotional feelings. We conversed together as parts of the same family; we congratulated each other as members of the Christian church; we rejoiced over one another, as heirs of the same glorious promises. Some interesting passage of Scripture, or some choice piece

of divinity, generally furnished the matter of our discourse; and while we endeavoured to obtain a clear and comprehensive view of the subject under consideration, a divine light would sometimes break in upon us, satisfying our doubts, exalting our conceptions, and cheering our hearts. We have then with one consent laid down our book, that we might uninterruptedly admire the beauties, and enjoy the sweets, of the prospect opening before us. And still as the scene has become more luminous, we have proceeded from wonder to wonder, with a degree of delight, far surpassing that which experimental philosophers ever felt, on discovering some grand secret in the operations of nature."

May your Sabbaths yield you enjoyments such as are here described, such as shall animate you to seek, and prepare you to possess, the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

Your affectionate Father.

LETTER V.

ON READING IMPROPER BOOKS.

My dear Son,

THERE are some topics of such vast importance, that we are justified in adverting to them frequently, and placing them in every possible point of light. The least hint may have its use and the longest dissertation may leave many ne

cessary particulars unnoticed.* An early taste for books, it was my own happiness to form; and it is my constant aim and desire, to see it formed and duly governed in all my dear children. I have lived long enough to witness in many instances the benefits it confers where found, and the dreary barrenness which usually marks the individual, or the portion of society, where it is wanting.

Reading may prove a preservative from numberless snares and temptations, to which we are exposed. It occupies the vacant hour, fixes the vacillating mind by chaining it to a definite object, and fires the cold, torpid heart with a thousand lively, animated interests. "In the course of my travels," says a good writer, "I have seen many a promising and fine young man gradually led to dissipation, gambling, and ruin, merely by the want of means to make a solitary evening pass pleasantly. I earnestly advise every youth, who quits that abode of purity, peace, and delight, his paternal home, to acquire a taste for reading and writing. At every place where he may reside long, let him study to make his apartments as attractive and comfortable as possible; for he will find a little extraordinary expense so bestowed at the beginning, good economy in the end: let him read the best books, and above all, let him never retire to rest, without at least a page of original comments on what he has seen, read, and heard in the day. This habit will teach him to observe and

* One of the letters in a former work, was on the pleasures of reading. A general view of the subject was there given, with various anecdotes and examples. The object of the present is more specific.

discriminate, for a man ceases to read with a desultory and wandering mind, which is utter waste of time, when he knows that an account of all the information he has gained must be written at night. His rule of conduct with regard to society, will then be *good company or none*, and he will find literature the protector of independence; the promoter of peace and refinement; and the guardian of religion, in principle and practice."*

If reading served only as an antidote to levity, licentiousness and profligacy, its value would be incalculable. But we may go further, and truly affirm, that it enriches as well as preserves the mind. It is the feeder of intellect, the prompter of genius, the purifier of taste. "The mind," said Sir Joshua Reynolds, "is but a barren soil; is a soil soon exhausted, and will produce no crop, or only one, unless it be continually fertilized and enriched with foreign matter. Invention is one of the great marks of genius; but if we consult experience, we shall find that it is by being conversant with the inventions of others, that we learn to invent, as by reading the thoughts of others, we learn to think."

Books open inexhaustible stores of information, to which we have easy and constant access. They record the diversified qualities and mutations of matter, and describe the powers and faculties, with all the subtile and sublime operations of the mind. They are the faithful and revered depositories of experience, wisdom, truth, and piety. Dr. Johnson, as his biographer remarks, on one occasion, enlarged on the advantages of reading,

* Sketches in Biography, by J. Clayton, Esq. A book in which you will find much to instruct and interest, written in a classical and engaging style.

and combated the idle notion, that knowledge enough may be acquired in conversation. "The foundation," said he, "must be laid by reading. General principles must be had from books, which, however, must be brought to the test of real life. In conversation you never get a system. What is said upon a subject is to be got from a hundred people. The parts of a truth, which a man gets thus, are at such a distance from each other, that he never attains to a full view." Mrs. Knowles said, "Dr. Johnson knows how to read better than any one; he gets at the substance of books directly, and tears out the heart of them." I am far from wishing you to receive as infallible oracles, all the opinions of this great master and dictator of literature; but the observation above repeated, will commend itself to your own judgment; nor ought the emphatical remark of his female eulogist, to be thrown away as useless.

He who constantly *spends* in company, without *recruiting* his resources in retirement and study, cannot but become poor; and whatever efforts may be made to disguise the fact, his intellectual poverty will betray itself. What is possessed, perhaps, stands out in all the pomp of display; but a keen eye beholds the bankruptcy and beggary, which the dexterity of art, and the glitter of ostentation, are anxiously employed to conceal.

But does reading necessarily and invariably become advantageous to young people? By no means. They have almost as much cause to be warned against unsuitable books, as against unsafe and unsuitable companions. All the endless varieties, both of moral good and moral evil, are incessantly issuing from the press. To allow, or encourage the young and inexperienced, to peruse

any books they can procure, is to put their best interests to the greatest hazard. I am well aware, that some plead for such indiscriminate reading, under the plausible pretence of promoting free inquiry; it is, however, an idle and fallacious plea. What should we say or think of a father, who would suffer his children to go into all kinds of company, even the lowest and vilest, to make them acquainted with the world? Or who would permit them to gorge all kinds of food, however deleterious, that they might learn their effects from experience? Should we not justly conclude him to be utterly unconcerned about preserving their morals untainted, or their health uninjured? And I know not what objection can be raised against promiscuous society, which does not equally bear against promiscuous reading. Judgment and care, in a prudent and wise choice, are alike necessary in both cases.

Pliny, a voluminous compiler, declared that there was no book so bad, as not to contain something good. "It is necessary, however, to observe," said an ingenious miscellanist, "that just and obvious as this reading axiom may appear, it requires a commentary. To read every book, would be fatal to the interests of most readers. Men of taste, who read variously, know, that the pains exceed the pleasures; to men of curiosity, the pleasures exceed the pains. The reader of erudition, who searches for facts, and avoids opinions, may therefore read every book. He must pick his few flowers from rugged rocks, and pass many days bewildered in wild deserts. But he who only desires to gratify a more delicate sensation, the reader of taste, must be contented to range in more contracted limits, and to restrict himself to

the paths of cultured pleasure grounds."* All that is here said as to the literary, applies with far greater force to the moral and religious habits of the mind. I shall in this place, my son, faithfully admonish you of the danger which there is in the productions of sceptics and infidels. How many thousands have been ruined by the fascinating volumes of Rosseau and Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Hume and Paine! These enemies of religion have done more mischief by their artful and insidious mode of attack, than by the edge and force of their weapons. They secretly mine in the dark, often march under false colours, or suddenly spring from an ambush upon their hapless unsuspecting victims. The leaders of infidelity have met with so many signal defeats from the able champions of divine truth, that they now aim chiefly at conquest by stratagem, and labour to captivate the young and inexperienced. It is not that their arguments and objections are formidable to such as are prepared to meet them; but numbers are taken unarmed, confounded by bold, startling assertions, entangled in the fine-spun webs of sophistry, or pierced and wounded by the poisoned shafts of ridicule. "If," says Paley, "the *matter* of sceptical objections be reprehensible, as calculated to produce an effect upon the reader, beyond what their real weight and place in the argument deserve, still more shall we discover of management and disingenuousness in the *form* under which they are dispersed among the public. Infidelity is served up in every shape that is likely to allure, surprise, or beguile the imagination; in a fable, a tale, a novel, a poem: in interspersed and broken hints; remote and oblique surmises; in books of travels, of philosophy, of

* D. Israeli.

natural history; in a word, in any form rather than the right one, that of a professed and regular disquisition. And because the coarse buffoonery and broad laugh of the old and rude adversaries of the Christian faith would offend the taste, perhaps, rather than the virtue of this cultivated age, a graver irony, a more skilful and delicate banter, is substituted in their place."

Let me then affectionately exhort you to refuse at once, and with firmness, any of those writings from the atheistical school, which may be offered and recommended to you. Be not alarmed at the charge of bigotry and prejudice. The juvenile mind, which loses its reverence for things sacred, its attachment for virtue and piety, is not so much cleared of prejudice, as robbed of principle. I am far from saying, that believers should never look into the works published by infidels. But the young ought first to study the doctrines and evidences of Christianity; to feel the solidity of the ground on which their faith rests; and to learn the use of their armour, before they venture out of the entrenchments by which they are defended. I would advise you to read with attention, Addison, Beattie, Paley, and Chalmers, on the evidences of revelation. Dr. Gregory's Letters, Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Campbell's masterly dissertation on Miracles, and Leland's View of Deistical Writers, are all works which will well remunerate an attentive perusal. I may say of the course which has been recommended, *probatum est*, it has been approved by experience. In reading the memoirs of Beattie, Gilpin, Griffin, and William Friend Durant, you cannot fail to be struck with this view of the subject. With the last-mentioned of those valuable young men, I was personally ac-

quainted, and admired, as did all who knew him, that constellation of talents and virtues, which graced and exalted his character.*

There is another species of writing against which I feel it right to warn you; namely, novels of fiction. The injury done to the susceptive minds and morals of youth, by these light, attractive works, is beyond the power of calculation. The few grains and scruples of good, which some of them contain, are lost and absorbed in a mass of splendid and delicious mischief. The old romances, full of marvellous adventures and magical scenes, giants, griffins, ghosts, and wizards, were fitted only for an ignorant and superstitious age, and are now fallen into utter neglect. But modern novels are sufficiently stored with high-wrought descriptions, brilliant incidents, extraordinary characters, fortune's golden favours, and honour's rare distinctions, to open a fairy field of enchant-

* "In him," says Dr. Wardlaw, "was united the splendour of science with the mild and holy radiance of sincere piety; not the sentimental piety of poetry and romance, but the intelligent devotion of examined and settled principle. He was a firm believer in divine revelation; and his was not a mind that could ever be satisfied with a belief, resting upon mere educational prejudice and prepossession. The truth of the gospel was a question of which he felt the infinite importance, and which he was early encouraged to examine. He gave all his mind with becoming seriousness to the inquiry; he weighed proofs; he considered objections; he searched the Scriptures for himself. His faith was thus founded on evidence, and established by his own experience of the power of those motives to godliness, which the gospel presents to the mind. Amidst the temptations of youth, and especially the fascinating seductions of 'that honour which cometh from men,' he maintained a steady and dignified consistency. He was serious upon serious subjects, and would never bear to hear them treated with levity."

ment to the impassioned, juvenile reader, and inspire him with disgust for the tame realities and sober duties of common life. Not to mention that many of these productions insinuate the most dangerous errors, and give to fashionable vices so many softening tints and agreeable seductive qualities, as cannot fail to recommend them; if the sentiments, separately taken, were good, the texture and combination of the whole is calculated to stimulate those powers of imagination and passion, which usually require to be checked and controlled, rather than excited. Fiction, it has been well remarked, is generally overwrought. "It is vice in caricature, or virtue in enamel: the former is frequently too bad to be dreaded, as likely to happen to us; the latter too high to be an object of expectation."

But it may be said, we have now many wonderfully fine and irresistibly captivating moral novels. Some of them are pure fictions; and others, with eccentric characters and strange vicissitudes, which might rival the wildest visions of the circulating library, profess to be facts, slightly modified, and a little coloured and dressed out, to suit the occasion. This is really a curious manœuvre in the tactics of literature, a master-piece of policy in the arts employed, *ad captandum vulgus*. Fiction was formerly wont to do her work alone, but now she must, forsooth, bribe and bring in falsehood to help her, and borrow materials and garniture from the sanctuary of God, to rear, and decorate, and recommend, her showy fabrics.

No one can doubt, but that truth may be communicated through the vehicle of fiction; or that a parable, an allegory, or a story, may be so constructed as to serve the interests of virtue and

piety. But the general effect of alluring and pernicious tales is on many accounts greatly to be deprecated. They prompt the young (which they are apt enough to learn without a prompter) to build castles in the air, and waste their time in laying out, cultivating, and adorning a fool's paradise. They create a distaste for books of a solid and improving kind, and prepare the way for those only which, by the intricacy and art of a plot, have the power to fix and enchain the mind, as a sorcerer's spell, and work up the passions to a feverish pitch of excitement. "At an early age," observes Dr. Knox, "the mental, like the animal taste, delights in that improper food, from which it is more likely to derive an atrophy, than to acquire nourishment." If this observation be just, and it will hardly admit a doubt, then the craving appetite for novels, which at present prevails, and the extraordinary pains taken to supply in boundless variety the means of indulging it, are not very favourable signs of the times, or circumstances that promise much for the rising generation.

I am not, however, disposed to restrict your reading to a barren and confined scope. Without entering the regions of infidelity and blasphemy, or the enchanted fields of fiction and romance, to imbibe the sceptic's deadly, or the novelist's delicious poison; history, biography, theology, philosophy, and general literature, will open an ample range, in which you may expatiate with daily profit and pleasure. And I will here repeat what I have frequently said to you and your brothers in conversation: In selecting a library, choose the best standard authors, and beware of frittering away your time amidst pamphlets, reviews, abridgments, and mis-

cellanies. This the age of *periodicals*, and they are poured forth in such shoals, from the penny magazine of nursery stories, to the costly volume of monthly or quarterly criticism and politics, that they bid fair to engross a great part of the time of the reading public. Yet while I am anxious that you should give most of your spare hours to writers of first rate talents and approved principles, and to such works as at once exercise and enlarge the mind, there are intervals in which a short essay, a poem, a literary, or a religious journal, may be run over with advantage. But even as to these, selection is necessary, and caution must keep up incessant vigilance, against a habit of desultory reading.

Do not consider the books you *purchase*, as being in the best sense *your own*, till the contents of them, at least their substance and pith, be laid up in the memory. It is mere vanity or trifling, to run over a multitude of volumes, as a traveller rapidly rides over a strange country, without either making observations as he passes, or carrying any thing away at the end of the journey. Yet I would guard you against a feeling of depression, if you find your advancement slow, and difficulties interposing to obstruct it. We must never forget the present lot, the limitations, and the trials of man, as a fallen and apostate creature. "All his pursuits of knowledge," says Gisborne, "are accompanied with drawbacks. Every accession is an additional step of elevation, which shows to him the progressively enlarging horizon of his ignorance. His mind is a storehouse of limited capacity; and if it be subdivided into many compartments, for the reception of numerous articles, the smaller is the portion which can be deposited in each. It is a granary, with a floor perforated by

crevices, through which the corn is incessantly trickling away." Beware that you store up that only, which is worth keeping; and then make the granary as secure as you can.

When you take any work in hand, which contains rich treasures of original matter, with profound research and close, consecutive trains of reasoning, do not hastily lay it aside, because it requires fixed and intense thought. Nothing difficult is mastered, nothing valuable gained, without strenuous resolutions, and patient, persevering efforts. And experience shows, that what tasks and calls forth the mind in the acquisition, gives a vigour and promptitude to its faculties, of more worth than the ideas acquired. "The understanding," says Locke, "should be brought to the difficult parts of knowledge by degrees, and in such a gradual proceeding, nothing is too hard for it." This method was pursued by the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton. He modestly said of himself, that if he had done any thing worthy of notice, if he had rendered the world any service, it was owing rather to industry and patient thought, than to natural quickness of intellect. "I keep the subject constantly before me," said he, "and wait till the first dawnings open slowly, by little and little, into a clear light."

Locke and Newton were possessed of pre-eminent abilities; but when we hear them state the process and workings of their minds, in such language as I have just recited, those who are gifted with only ordinary capacity, may reap benefit from their example.

Your affectionate Father.

LETTER VI.

ON THE TEMPTATIONS INCIDENT TO BUSINESS.

My dear Son,

THERE is no department, or course of human life, without its temptations. Those who are employed in offices of dignity and power, and those who are devoted to the pursuits of learning and science, or to the less dazzling, but not less useful occupations of trade and commerce, have all their peculiar advantages; but these are counterbalanced by certain dangers and seductions, which must be met, and ought not therefore to be concealed. I am aware, that it may be said, caution begets fear and fear betrays the succours of reason, and weakens the ramparts of self-defence. Herodicus, as Aristotle tells us, took such care of his health that he was afraid to stir, and in the end became so feeble and sickly, that he could neither use his limbs, nor relish his food. May we not injure the mind, as well as the body, by a distrustful and excessive vigilance? Herodicus only watched his dangers on one side; it was not so much excessive vigilance which ruined him, as a vigilance

partial and ill-directed. Surely, as the mariner provides himself with maps and charts, and the results of nautical experience, before he embarks for some distant coast, so ought those to be well prepared, who are just commencing the eventful voyage of life. The direction of the tides and currents should be known, and the rocks and sands, which have caused many a direful wreck, should be marked that they may be shunned.

In conducting the affairs of business, let no consideration induce you to practise or sanction fraud and deceit, in any form however plausible, in any instance however slight. Numbers who would shudder at the idea of committing forgery, and blush to incur the charge of uttering gross lies, and violating solemnly ratified contracts, can habitually stoop to petty equivocations and tricks, under the specious pretext, that they are the common and necessary mysteries and manœuvres of trade. Defects in their goods are often disingenuously concealed, advantage is taken of the ignorant or inexperienced with whom they deal, and a thousand under-hand devices are employed, which are incapable of bearing the light. But remember, that no custom, connivance, profit, or supposed necessity, can convert wrong into right, or supply a valid plea for fraud, falsehood, and duplicity. The obligations of truth, of honour, and of equity, are never to be invaded, never to be relaxed and forgotten. While these virtues are maintained unblemished, in the transactions of commerce, they give a lustre to the character of the individual, the company, or the nation.

I am far from agreeing with those, who contend

that utility is the basis and standard of morals;* but even upon this scheme it would be found, in the long run, that an upright conduct and consistent course in the affairs of trade, have greatly the advantage over cunning and deceit, whatever winding and wayward paths they pursue. We dare not indeed measure moral duties by a scale or rule of calculation, applied to worldly profit and loss.

But shall we, cries the shrewd man of the world, sacrifice every fair advantage which good fortune throws in our way, to weak and childish scruples? Or shall we direct our steps in all emergencies by musty scraps and precepts drawn from the schools? No! as Hannibal despised, as the dreams of dotage, what Phoimio taught on the art of war; so the man actually engaged in business, contemns the theories and injunctions of the pedantic scholar, who only sees the world through the dim medium of books. To satisfy a practised adept in the villanies of the world, would be no easy matter. But however little deference may be paid to the schools of philosophy, there is a higher authority to which we must bow, or bear the burden of an awful responsibility by refusing. A Christian must say what is true, and do what is right, irrespective of all consequences. "So natural," says the venerable Hooker, "is the union of religion with justice, that we may boldly deem there is neither where both are not." Infidels themselves have acknowledged the value of Christianity, in

* "If," says Dugald Stewart, when opposing the theory of morals grounded on utility, "indeed, without the guidance of any internal monitor, man were left to infer the duties incumbent on him, from a calculation and comparison of remote effects, we may venture to affirm, that there would not be enough virtue left in the world, to hold society together."

repressing the vices and promoting the virtues of mankind. "The gospel," says Bolingbroke, "is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and universal charity." Oh, were this lesson duly learned and practised, by those who own its divine origin and peerless worth, how much would society be improved! Voltaire, Rousseau, Morgan, and Hume, have made concessions, which agree with the testimony above recited. Time has been, when our holy religion threw a lustre over the moral character of its disciples, which drew reluctant praise from the lips of pagans. The first followers of Christ were distinguished by their inflexible adherence to truth, their steady, unshaken integrity, their meekness, gentleness, zeal, and fortitude. Even Gibbon, the infidel historian, affirms "that a calif of the house of Abbas was heard to declare, that the Christians were most worthy of *trust* in the administration of Persia."*

* It were easy to quote some pleasing examples in modern times. The late excellent Mr. Burnet, of Aberdeen, when he had in any matter of business made greater profit than he expected, returned to correspondents a gratuity the surplusage of his computation. In this manner, during the course of his mercantile career, some thousand pounds were returned. When he was blamed for this, because it deviated from general practice, his uniform reply was, "With the conduct of others I have nothing to do. It is my duty to regulate *my own* by the *rules of equity*, as they appear to me."

Dr. Franklin, in his memoirs, gives the following account of Mr. Denham, an American merchant:—"He had formerly been in business at Bristol, had failed in debt to a number of people, compounded and went to America: there, by a close application to business as a merchant, he acquired a plentiful fortune in a few years. Returning to England in a ship with me, he invited his old creditors to an entertainment, at which he thanked them for the easy

Be not surprised, that I enforce a rigid adherence to truth and justice, by appealing to the claims and obligations of a religion, which bears the authentic stamp and signature of Heaven. It is to this we must turn for the surest rules of conduct, as well as the best grounds of consolation. Dr. Chalmers has justly observed, "It is not vulgarizing Christianity to bring it down to the very humblest occupations of human life. It is in fact dignifying human life, by bringing it up to the level of Christianity. When the confidential agent is told to resist the slightest inclination to any unseen freedom with the property of his employers, or to any undiscoverable excess in the charges of his management; this is not robbing religion of its sacredness, but spreading its sacredness over society. It is evangelizing human life, by impregnating its minutest transactions with the spirit of the gospel."*

In carrying on business, do not betray or cherish a peevish, morose, complaining spirit. Those who have much to do with the world, find many things which have a tendency to ruffle and irritate

composition they had favoured him with; and when they expected nothing but the treat, every man at the first remove, found under the plate, an order on a banker for the full amount of the unpaid remainder, with interest."

* Lord Bacon touches this topic, when treating on ethics, with his usual skill. He complains of the aversion that writers have to "treat of the trite and vulgar matters, which are deemed neither subtle enough for dispute, nor eminent enough for ornament. In ethics, the philosophers have culled out a certain splendid mass of matter, whereby they could principally show their force of genius or power of eloquence; but for other things, that chiefly conduce to practice, as they could not be so gracefully set off, they have entirely dropped them."

the mind. They have to make their way through turbulent elements, and a multitude of jarring interests. Now in such circumstances, a man will be as likely to fail of success by want of good temper, as by a want of good principle. The lapidary knows that a cloud or speck in precious stones, greatly lessens their value; and that even a diamond must have its roughness removed, and its lustre brought out, before it is fit for the market. Though solidity is the first requisite, as regards the minds and the morals of men, this quality will not suffice without polish. It is not enough for a tradesman that he keep his word, if he loses his temper; that he wrongs not another of a penny of his property, if he robs all around him of their peace. A fretful, complaining spirit in business betrays ingratitude, and feeds the latent springs of discontent. You will find people of this character, after reserving all their good humour, like their good apparel, for holiday times, as if afraid of its being too soon worn out; they have no smiles nor suavities for every-day use, at the counter, desk, or fireside.

Let me exhort you to keep up habitual cheerfulness in your mind, and then it will naturally appear in your manners. Parrhasius, the celebrated ancient painter, had such a fund of good humour, that he was always found singing at his labours, which circumstance is supposed to have imparted so much life and lustre to his compositions. If, like the artist, you do not sing at your work, as a Christian, you should daily and hourly make melody in your heart to the Lord, and this is the best method of producing harmony and concord in all around you. If you have seriousness for your ballast, cheerfulness for your sail, hope for your

anchor, and prudence for your helm, your voyage on the tempestuous sea of commercial life may be not only safe and successful, but on the whole rather pleasant.

In matters of business, beware of *indulging* a *sanguine*, *rash*, and *speculative turn* of mind. Most young people at the outset of their career, are impatient of the slow steps requisite to insure success. They burn for some new and daring enterprise; and if they find here and there a bold adventurer suddenly raised to wealth, they are captivated with these favourites of fortune; not considering how many blanks there must be to one such prize. With much confidence and little experience, they launch out into perilous deeps, where every possession and every hope are speedily swallowed up and lost. Of late years, this spirit of rash speculation has, in our country, risen to a great height, and produced as might be expected, the most terrible and disasterous effects. I recollect that within a few years several instances of tradesmen, canvassing at vast expense for seats in parliament, whose names soon after appeared in the gazette as bankrupts.

But is there not, it may be said, on the other hand, a timid, creeping, cold, contracted spirit, as little to be recommended as the extreme of a sanguine temper? May we not be too backward and weary, as well as too forward and impetuous? Doubtless, and, therefore, I would caution you to shun both extremes. A Christian ought always to bear in mind, that by rashly undertaking what is beyond his means, and launching into speculations of great hazard, he is in fact laying himself open to the charge of injustice, and creating demands, which he may not be able honourably to meet.

He does not involve himself *alone*, but draws others along with him into embarrassment and insolvency. It is certainly true, that some move with more caution than spirit, and adhere to a narrow and crippling system; but the temper of the times leads chiefly to the opposite danger.

While I am on this subject, it may be right to apprize you of two families, the direct or collateral branches of which are spread over the whole commercial world. These are the Dashwells and the Dolittles; and however proper it may be, that you should know their character, I hope you will enter into no close connexion with them. The Dolittle tribe, are as torpid, tardy, dilatory, and sleepy a race of beings, as the earth contains. Their grammar is full of the optative, but has no potential mood. Their arithmetic is without the rule of proportion, and the rule of practice. Their logic, renders plain points doubtful, and their philosophy is mainly employed in making out catalogues of impossibilities. You may know these hapless wights by their mean appearance, their drowsy motion, and drone-like manner.

The Dashwells on the contrary, are often very prepossessing both in their appearance and manner. The Stock Exchange is their grand resort; but they are seen flying about and flourishing away in all places. Now and then one of this family makes a fortune, and a figure with it through life, but most of them have only an ephemeral existence. If any gay dandy Dashwell should solicit your acquaintance, or your concurrence in any brilliant adventure of vast gain, tell him that he has mistaken his man; that you have not studied alchemy, and have no hope of finding the philosopher's stone; that you prefer walking on solid ground to

soaring on waxen wings; that you would rather handle one honest penny, than grasp at a thousand South-sea bubbles. In a word, keep aloof both from the boasting Dashwells, and the drowsy Do-littles. Calm good sense, joined with experience, is the best preservative, when you have to steer between Scylla and Charybdis. The useful, but sober, unpretending faculty, can do wonders, though they are not such as suit the genius of romance. Guided by the dictates of this quality, you will neither yield to the dazzling schemes of the artful projector, nor to the trammels of the dull plodder; you will neither think every change an improvement, nor condemn all suggested improvements from the dread of innovation.

A long run of success in business is too apt to produce an inordinate love of money, or an eager desire of consequence. *Avarice* and *ambition* may grow in any circumstances; but usually flourish and spread with most rapidity and luxuriance when the sun of prosperity shines. Riches enable to be richer still; and richer still, what mortal can resist? Property once realized to a certain extent, and employed in a lucrative and steadily managed traffic, has a surprising power of accumulation. But this is not all; for while it increases in mass, it no less increases in magic influence. The heart yields to the potent spell; every thought and affection is devoted to money. There is something so imperceptible, and so delusive, in this process, that the individual is scarcely ever conscious of it. Hence our Lord gives us the seasonable and solemn warning, "Take ye heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." "Mind the main chance," cries the

world; "get money, and it will get you every thing else you can want." But this mercenary maxim is as *false* as it is *odious*. "Those," says Lord Bacon, "who imagine all things may be bought by their riches, forget they have sold themselves." And who would purchase and employ them? The meagre and inexorable master they drudge to serve, is mammon. To this hateful and ignominious tyrant they are bound for life; and when at last, weighed down with cares, and pierced with sorrows, the term of servitude expires, they are "dragged through the quagmire of parsimony to the gulf of ruin."

But when any one gets forward in business, if the love of money be not engendered, it is probable that desire of consequence, which is the swell of ambition, will appear. As he rises, his prospects extend; his eyes begin to fix on the glittering summits of rank and power; his old friends and connexions are slighted; and he pants to emulate his superiors, and distance such as occupy the same level and line. But advancement in the steep and slippery paths of promotion is always difficult, often perilous. Where this aspiring disposition bursts forth like a flame, it frequently so changes a tradesman's habits and manners, that he both misses the object he seeks, and loses the vantage ground he had gained. He is despised by the class he flatters, and deserted by those on whom he chiefly depends; for nothing is more disgusting than upstart pride. Sometimes this spirit of ambition, instead of taking a civil or political direction, strikes out into a whimsical fondness for certain of the fine arts. A man that has done pretty well in weighing groceries, or measuring and selling off printed calicoes and Irish

linens, must now become a critic of the master-pieces of exquisite skill, and weigh and measure the merits of a Raphael, a Michael Angelo, or a Canova. Indifferent to his character as a tradesman, he piques himself on his credit as a connoisseur, or a collector of fine pictures and scarce books. I have before earnestly recommended you to employ your spare hours in reading, and am not going to negative that advice. Lord Bacon has observed, "That the most active men have many vacant hours, while they expect the tides and returns of business; and the question is, how those spaces shall be filled up, whether with pleasure or study. There is no fear, that learning should displace business; for it rather keeps and defends the mind against idleness and pleasure." But this requires to be qualified, and this shrewd observer, in another part of the same work, says, that some in pursuit of knowledge resemble the lark, which flies high for the sole purpose of singing; but others, the hawk, which turns his lofty soaring to advantage. If the unhallowed passions of avarice and ambition are not early repressed and subdued, they usurp the empire of the mind, and reign without control. But as there are temptations peculiar to the sunny seasons of prosperity, others will be found principally amidst the storms and dark days of adversity. When the best-laid plans are suddenly disconcerted by public events and vicissitudes, which no sagacity could foresee; when losses and reverses come in thick succession, and the negligence of one person is aggravated by the detected unfaithfulness of another; when difficulties in design and contrivance, being at length surmounted, are followed by disappointments in execution and result; the spirit, which is not well

fortified and prepared, is very apt to sink into despondency, and quit the helm in the crisis that demands double promptitude, vigilance, energy, and firmness.

Now I desire that you may know these temptations before you meet them, and have the mind duly disciplined for the hour of trial. Be not elated by a tide of success, nor depressed by a series of reverses. "Acquam memento, rebus in arduis, servare mentem." Remember, to keep a mind always calm amidst difficult affairs.

There is another danger, against which I would admonish you, that of being too much engaged in business. I will here suppose a common case, that you meet with no great profits, or heavy losses, no remarkable changes and occurrences; yet the every day transactions of trade, without much Christian watchfulness and devotion, have a manifest tendency to engross and secularize the heart. Let your intervals of retirement for sober thought and prayer be kept free from encroachment. At the commencement of each day, seek the direction, support, and strength of a merciful and faithful God. Address to him the supplication used by one of our most admired writers:

> O guide me through the various maze
> My doubtful feet are doomed to tread;
> And spread thy shield's protecting blaze,
> When dangers press around my head!

In the multifarious concerns of business, you will meet with superiors, whose orders and demands are unreasonable and exorbitant; and with inferiors, whose minds and manners are so perverted, as to put your patience to a severe test. Learn under such circumstances the difficult but needful

lesson of self-control. If your temper is irritated, and your tongue obeys the impulse of feeling rather than the dictate of judgment, you will make more troubles than you find, and lose more advantages than the most artful, dishonest, or violent men, could take from you.

Your affectionate Father.

LETTER VII.

DANGER OF FORMING INDOLENT, EXTRAVAGANT, OR REPULSIVE HABITS.

My dear Son,

It has been often remarked, how great a contrast there usually is between persons who have risen to eminence in the political or commercial world, and their sons and successors in the same sphere. Spirit, industry, economy, affability and kindness, surmount or obviate difficulties, concentrate resources which become efficient by being combined, command attention, conciliate good will, and engage esteem and friendly concurrence, wherever they exert their influence. But indolence, extravagance, haughtiness, and acrimony, seldom fail to spread over scenes once smiling with plenty and peace, the curse of barrenness, or the plague of enmity and strife.

It has been often said, that money is the life-blood, the sinews, and nerves of business; and the common proverb is upon every one's tongue, "that possession includes nine out of the ten points of law."

These oracles may be fairly questioned; or at any rate, in the sense often given to them, flatly contradicted. Those who know any thing of the world, well know, that business has no life, spirits, nerves, or sinews, but good principles and good habits. It is mind, not money, which imparts both impulse and direction to the whole system. And whatever possession be in point of law, it is of little avail in point of fact, where energy, activity, watchfulness, and prudence, are wanting.

Al Amin, the son of the famous Ibaroun-Al-Raschid, was a remarkable instance of supineness and apathy. He received the crown with every advantage, but having previously given himself to gaming, women, and wine, he was not qualified to retain it. When news was brought to him that Thahes, the general of his rival, was approaching, he was amusing himself with angling. "Do not disturb me," said he to the messenger, "for my freedman, Kouter, has already caught two fish, and I have not taken one." During the very attack of Bagdat, he was found by his ministers calmly playing at chess; and he desired they would let him alone, for he was just going to give his adversary a check-mate. A short time before he was taken, he sent for one of his singing girls to entertain him; and the verses she sung being considered by him as prophetic of his end, he cried with a sigh, "When destiny defeats our projects, all our precautions are useless." This sketch of eastern biography presents to us, it must be allowed, an extreme case; but the same effects of supineness and self-indulgence, in a lower and more circumscribed sphere, may be seen every day. Many a wealthy citizen places his sons in business, with ample means and excellent facilities, but lives to

see them reduced by sloth and luxury to all the miseries of want, and all the meanness of servile dependence. Then these effeminate beings lay their calamity, as did the wretched and despicable Al Amin, to the charge of the destinies, or the times, or the taxes, or the agents they employed. They had a heart to get forward, but who can successfully contend against the torrent or the tempest? These excuses are as idle, weak, and worthless, as those who use them. It was said by the sages of antiquity, "A wise man rules the stars," and the aphorism may be still admitted, if employed as a spur to diligence, and not as a stirrup to indolence. To talk of our wishes and desires after any object, without corresponding efforts, is worthy only of ridicule and contempt. "For," says Richard Baxter, "there is most of the heart where there is most of the will, and there is most of the will where there is most endeavour; and where there is most endeavour, there is *generally* most success." So that endeavour must prove the truth of our desire, and success will generally prove the sincerity of our endeavour.

"Par negotiis, neque supra." Neither above nor below your business. This maxim of Tacitus, the celebrated Roman Historian, describes a man exactly fitted to the station he fills. That you may advantageously and usefully occupy the place allotted you, let me recommend you to form an *early habit of industry*. Without industry, no man can excel in any profession, or reasonably expect to succeed in any employment. Without it, artists, philosophers, statesmen, merchants, inventers, and manufacturers, would never have achieved those things which so eminently benefit mankind. Melancthon, when an engagement was made, expected not only the *hour*, but the *minute* to be fixed

that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense. Robert Boyle was so intent on his experiments in natural philosophy, that he had notices printed and circulated to prevent the interruption given to his pursuits and labours by the visits of numerous acquaintances. Gibbon, in preparing his History of the Roman Empire, shut himself up to hard study, and, as he tells us, was often tempted to throw away the labour of seven years; yet rallied and persevered till he had completed his task. Reynolds attained excellence by assiduity, and painted many hours every day during the long space of thirty years. And even the poets, elegantly as they are wont to invoke the aid of the fabled muses, would have done nothing without patient application. "Doth a country," says Dr. Isaac Barrow, "flourish in wealth, in grandeur, in prosperity? It must be imputed to industry; to the industry in its governors settling good order; to the industry of its people, following profitable occupations. When sloth creepeth in, then all things corrupt and decay; then the public state doth sink into disorder, penury, and a disgraceful condition." Wonder not that I am anxious that you should be industrious, for this is a point of high moment. Fix your times for rising and retiring, and your hours of employment and relaxation, and adhere to them. Diligence and punctuality are of great importance, in almost every kind of business. They preserve order and harmony, both in the mind, and in the management of affairs; they secure interest, credit, and influence with those who have power to assist us. Some of the instances I have above given may seem less appropriate, because the individuals moved in a different sphere; but the one I am about to mention

will be directly in point. Dr. Franklin, in his memoirs, earnestly inculcates industry, that others might know the use of a virtue, to which he was so largely indebted for his own advancement. When he commenced printer, at Philadelphia, most people thought he could not succeed; but his diligence soon produced a change in the general opinion. "The industry of that Franklin," said Dr. Baird, in a company where this matter was agitated, "is superior to any thing I ever saw of the kind. I see him still at work, when I go home from the club, and he is at work again before his neighbours are out of bed." His own account is worthy of being here transcribed. As he possessed no capital, he had to begin business with borrowed money. "I began," says he, "to pay off by degrees the debt I had contracted; and to insure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be *really* industrious and frugal, but also to avoid any *appearance* of the contrary. I was plainly dressed, and never seen in any place of public amusement. I never went a fishing or hunting. A book, indeed, enticed me sometimes from my work, but it was seldom and by stealth, and occasioned no scandal; and to shew that I did not think myself above my employment, I conveyed home, sometimes in a wheelbarrow, the paper I purchased at the warehouses. I thus obtained the reputation of being an industrious young man, and very punctual in my payments. The merchants who imported articles of stationery, solicited my custom; others offered to furnish me with books, and my little trade went on prosperously."

But it is not merely for the sake of rising in the world, that I recommend industry. You have lit-

le prospect of bearing any resemblance to Frank-lin or Arkwright. But those who can never attain affluence or brilliance, may be highly respectable and useful. Epictetus, one of the ancient philoso-phers, compares human life to a drama, and man-kind to actors, who have their several parts assign-ed. The great master stands behind the scenes, and observes every thing that is done, or neglect-ed. Some have a short, and some a long part al-lotted them; some a low, and others a high one. It is not he that acts the highest or most shining part on the stage, that comes off with most credit; but he that acts his part best, whatever it be. Ac-cording to this representation, the man of indolence incurs decisive condemnation. But a higher au-thority than Epictetus may be here adduced. Christ has taught us, that talents are bestowed up-on all, with the solemn charge to occupy them till the day of reckoning arrive. And when the Sov-ereign of the universe comes, and calls us to give in our account, the unprofitable servant, who hides his talent in the earth, will be sentenced to outer darkness, where there are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

We are expressly commanded, "to be diligent in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Sloth is a *rust*, which, if permitted to settle, at once deforms and destroys. In temporal or spirit-ual matters, it is odious, disgraceful, and in the highest degree injurious. I hope it is the desire of your heart to act in all things with a single eye to the will and favour of God, and thus the ordinary pursuits of life will be raised to offices of relig-ion. Keep constantly in view the chief end of your being, and seize every opportunity of serving and honouring the mighty King of kings. This is

the art of turning all to gold; the art of levying a rich revenue of solid and enduring profit, from the secular occupations and common events of life.

There is another evil to which young people, in the outset of their course, are very liable, I mean *extravagance*. Indolence is a loathsome and disgusting vice; extravagance can assume a decent garb, and often wins from the mercenary and frivolous the praise of liberality. The young man, who wishes to emerge from obscurity and make a figure, incurs expenses, which involve him in perplexity and embarrassment, ere he is aware. I have already endeavoured to impress your mind with the baseness of avarice, in all the selfish dispositions it cherishes, and all the sordid habits it contracts; but extravagance, though less despicable, is far more dangerous, because its allurements more easily fall in with the prevailing passions of youth. Be not then ambitious to shine, to keep on a level with those who have larger incomes or expectations. Justice must precede, accompany, and sustain generosity. Bear this in mind, and you will neither give nor spend at random. Both will be done on principle, done according to a system, which has its definite rules, measures, limits, and motives. Keep your account, both of income and disbursements, with a frequent inspection of its various items. The cause of most young men's final overthrow and ruin, may be referred to their misplacing both honour and shame. They would blush to say, we cannot afford this ornament, or that indulgence; but for want of courage and consistency to pause at the right point, they too often involve themselves in debt and disgrace together. Dreading shame, where it could not *really*

affect them, they meet it in a form which deeply stains the character, before it even touches and alarms the mind. I would have you *economical*, not mean and parsimonious. This is not the nice hair-splitting distinction of divines, or school casuists. I shall here repeat the words of one of our most eloquent statesmen and admired writers.

"Mere parsimony," says Mr. Burke, "is not economy. It is separable in theory from it; and in fact it may, or it may not, be a part of economy, according to circumstances. Economy is a distributive virtue, and consists not in saving, but in selection. Parsimony requires no providence, no sagacity, no powers of combination, no comparison, no judgment. Mere instinct, and that not an instinct of the noblest kind, may produce this false economy in perfection. The other economy has larger views. It demands a discriminative judgment, and a firm, sagacious mind. It shuts one door to impudent importunity, only to open another and a wider to unpresuming merit."

To this fine passage from a senator, I shall add the following advice given by Dr. Johnson to his friend: "Make an impartial estimate of your revenue; and whatever it is, live upon less. Resolve never to be poor. Frugality is not only the basis of quiet, but of beneficence. No man can help others that wants himself; we must have enough, before we can have to spare."

But the *positive* evils of extravagance are constantly before our eyes. How many are at this moment perishing in filth and famine, in disgrace and wretchedness, from this cause. Anacharsis, the Scythian, said, "The vine bears three kinds of fruit: the first, pleasure; the second, intoxication; and the third, remorse." The prodigal sen-

sualist's true scale, might be graduated by this beautiful maxim. Pleasure to a certain point is innocent; beyond that, it is criminal; and criminality invariably terminates in anguish and misery. I shall close my counsels on this point, by subjoining the words of one, whose valuable work I have before recommended to your perusal; of one whose faithfulness, prudence, gentleness, and affection, in reproving, and encouraging youth, acquired him the honourable appellation of *the young man's friend.*

"The prodigal fails of the very reward which he proposes as the chief object of his expense. In spite of all his wishes and efforts, even weak men perceive that he is totally destitute of generosity; and those who most flatter, are the first to forsake him; while to shelter their own meanness and treachery, they proclaim more loudly than any others, his weakness, faults, and miseries, to mankind.

"Let every youth, then, fasten his eye on his wretched character, his pernicious conduct, and his deplorable end. His own exposure let him strongly feel. Let him realize, with solemn emotions of mind, that *idleness* and *profusion*, are broad and beaten roads to ruin, both in this world and that which is to come. With these views, let him devote all his time to some useful and upright employment; and thus make every day yield its blessings. What he acquires by commendable industry, let him faithfully preserve by prudent, watchful care. In this manner, he will become honourable in the sight of wise and good men, a blessing to his family, and to mankind: while he will at the same time fulfil one important end of his being."*

* Dwight's System of Theology.

Let me press upon you, my son, the duty of being kind, courteous, affable, and obliging to all. Some young persons, who are firm and conscientious in their conduct, by cherishing a constitutional propensity to seclusion, contract rude and repulsive habits. They are seldom seen in company, and when seen, are neither esteemed nor respected. If others follow indiscriminately the opinions, maxims, fashions, follies, and vanities of the world, these persons seem to glory in affected and useless singularity. Their stiff and awkward gestures, clownish motions, stern and morose looks, and cold or contemptuous speeches, render them highly disagreeable; and while they feel themselves uncomfortable in good society, and of course labour to shun it, this very seclusion increases the asperity by which they are distinguished. Mr. Addison has justly said, "It is not the religion of men which sours their temper, but their temper which sours their religion."

When you are engaged in the necessary duties of business, and when you are called to spend an hour in the company of friends, let your deportment be amiable, graceful, and becoming. Let your person be neat in its attire, equally exempt from the imputation of niggardliness and foppishness. When Socrates saw Antisthenes evidently obtruding and displaying his mean, tattered cloak, he said to him, "Why so ostentatious? I see thy vanity through the rags that cover thee." Harsh and repulsive manners are not less to be condemned, because some *great*, but *eccentric* characters, have chosen to adopt them. If allowance be made for profound knowledge, or original genius, the maxim of Tacitus, "Intuta quæ indecora," those things which are unseemly are unsafe, will

be found applicable in all ordinary cases. Nor will either honour or truth, wisdom or wit, be the worse for a modest, unassuming, affable, and engaging address.

And while, in my last letter, I pressed upon you the importance of truth and honesty in all your dealings, and in the present endeavour to guard you against indolent, extravagant, selfish, and repulsive habits; I send you not to the school of the Jesuits to learn morals, nor to the school of Lord Chesterfield, to acquire rules and graces of politeness. No; I point you to the great fountain of light and wisdom, the adorable Master whom you serve. Let that code of laws, which bears his sanction and royal signature, be dear to your heart, and embodied in your life. "It may be fairly assumed, that to the gospel alone belongs the honour of diffusing the *morality of principle*. While other systems, and other considerations, may lead to the act, and to the general habit of integrity, and may constitute a man all, in point of veracity, justice, and even beneficence, that the world in general could possibly desire; it remains as the exclusive achievement of the gospel, to rouse the criminal torpor of the human heart; to make man alive to his spiritual relations; to touch those chords of action in his inmost soul, which shall vibrate through his whole character; to inspire him with the love of the Divine Source of all his mercies; to create obedience from the high consideration of redemption; and to collect into one brilliant focus all the scattered principles of obedience, which may be derived from a consideration of the character, works, and dispensations of a God of love."*

* See Morrison's valuable Lectures on the Reciproca Obligations of Life.

Look then, my child, to the gospel for your light and guidance, for your succour and strength, and the motives which are to animate you. Imbibe the spirit of Christ, and you will abhor sloth, and luxury, effeminacy, and injustice, and moroseness, not less on account of their intrinsic evil, than their baneful fruits and effects. A system of economy, for the right use of your time and property, founded on principles, familiarized by practice, cannot fail to secure to you many advantages. A manly freedom and mild suavity of behaviour; an undeviating regard to truth in your words, and rectitude in your dealings; a purity of sentiment and speech, emanating from purity of mind, will set a stamp of worth and dignity upon your character, and, what is of still higher moment, will enable you to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men. "Finally, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Your affectionate Father.

LETTER VIII.

ERRORS AND INCONSISTENCIES WHICH PREVAIL IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD.

My dear Son,

It is a delicate and difficult business to give advice, and particularly to utter censure and administer reproof. Yet who pauses, or hesitates to undertake the task? Those who are the least fit are generally the most forward to direct, judge, or condemn others. Impressed with this feeling, I have carefully weighed what is here prepared for your perusal, and suppressed many things which I had first written. We who are parents, need the guidance of our Father in heaven to qualify us for guiding the steps of our children.

In the preceding letters I have represented the spirit, maxims, customs, projects, pleasures, honours, and distinctions of the *great world*, as all full of danger and delusion. Sage wisdom and mature experience have long since pronounced this verdict, and every successive period of time ratifies and confirms it. If this statement and representation be admitted as just, you ought to prosecute the journey of life, as a traveller passes through a country infested by thieves, and robbers, and wild beasts, or replete with noxious plants which please the eye, and noxious airs and vapours which soften and relax the whole frame.

I wish I could say, that the *religious world* were a safe and *serene* inclosure; but truth compels me to affirm, that numberless errors, dangers, follies, and inconsistencies, abound even there. It requires a far more able geographer than I am, to explore this region thoroughly, to point out its various products and peculiarities, to delineate its multifarious tribes and clans, with their dresses, dialects, customs, and characters. Those who can do all this in a clear and definite manner, with firmness and impartiality, may, for aught I know, achieve a very important service; but my sole aim is, at present, to drop a few hints which I hope may prove useful.

In the religious world, there are *speculatists* and *skeptics* who broach specious opinions, and find their element and chief delight in controversy. Men of this cast generally profess a deep and determined hostility to prejudice, an ardent love to truth, a diffusive candour, and a spirit of free inquiry. Be not deceived with fine names and flattering words. These pompous declaimers are mainly intent upon sapping divine revelation, to exalt human reason. They deny and degrade the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, to make way for their own fine-spun, philosophical, and self-elating theories. Filled with conceit, and plumed with vanity, they disown the name, yet perform the work, and carry on the warfare of infidels. All the truths which humble men believe, and good men revere and love, they labour to involve in sophistry and perplexity, or to cover with ridicule and contempt. Away with mysteries, they cry; away with mouldy, obsolete creeds; away with decrepid, crumbling, empty, useless forms; and let philosophy with all her charms and

attractions assert her rights, and regenerate the world. Thinking and serious men, however, will not be in haste to follow such counsel, and given by such advisers. "As," says Lord Bacon, "to seek *divinity* in *philosophy*, as if you would seek the living among the dead; so to seek *philosophy* in *divinity* is all one as to seek the dead among the living. We ought not to attempt to draw down and submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but, on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth." If you should ever meet with any of the skeptical tribe, who call themselves the only rational Christians, because indeed they have cleared away the errors and corruptions accumulated by time, and in their thorough reformation have nearly discarded all the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, do not so far feed their self-importance as to enter the lists of debate with them.

In the religious world there are *enthusiasts*, who attach the highest possible consequence to their ecstatic feelings. That genuine piety touches the heart, as well as enlightens the mind, must surely be granted; for every one ought to hate what is infinitely odious, and love what is supremely amiable and excellent. But the people of whom I speak appear to be carried away with the wild flights of fancy, and borne along by the resistless floods and torrents of passion. It is heat without light, which generates and spreads the ferments with which they are inflated. Now their feelings, as if immersed in a freezing mixture, are cooled down to zero, and then suddenly raised to the boiling point. Their joys and sorrows have no medium, but run with electric violence into the extremes of rapture and anguish.

Christian experience has, indeed, its vicissitudes, its conflicts, and its comforts ; but beware of being made the dupe of an excited and ungoverned imagination. Whatever ardour of affection and zeal may enliven and expand the soul in the duties and enjoyments of piety, a sober and well-informed judgment is to grasp the helm and guide our course.*

In the religious world, you may meet with a class of persons, whom, to correctly designate, we ought perhaps to term *fatalists*. They have but one favourite topic, which in their hands, is worn to the last thread. Whatever subject is started by others, they speedily turn it to the absolute decrees and eternal purposes of God. They are fixed or moved, thrown low or raised high, by a chain of inexorable necessity ; and whether its links are of vulgar mould, or forged and polished in some famous shop of metaphysics, this chain is, in their estimation, strong enough to bind down all agents, and extended enough to include all times, circumstances, and events. The class I am now describing are usually, and not improperly, called Antinomians; their opposition to the law of God, and to the claims and obligations of Christian holiness, being connected with the loftiest pitch of presumption and self-confidence and with a contempt for all who differ from them, which shows itself in unmeasured effusions of acrimony and bitterness. I advise you not to waste your time and your spirits, by wrangling and disputing with

* On this subject I know of no books more worthy of perusal than Dr. Watts on the Passions, and President Edwards on the Affections. A judicious Abridgment of Edwards on the Affections is published by James Loring, 132 Washington Street, Boston.

these men. Neither skeptics nor Antinomians are, if we make a few very rare exceptions, vulnerable by argument. Those who are only partially entangled may be susceptible of impression, but when deeply involved in their errors, their case is almost desperate.

Yet let me not be misunderstood in the drift and design of these admonitions. I grant, that when you turn to the Scriptures, many things will be found there, which transcend your feeble faculties. Now whatever relates to the perfections and decrees of God, is to be cordially received, however difficult it may be to be comprehended. Hervey, speaking on the subject of predestination, modestly says, "I should renounce my very reason, if I did not believe what Omniscience attests, even though it should imply what is altogether inexplicable by my scanty conceptions; and why should the incaverned mole, whose dwelling is in darkness, whose sight is but a small remove from blindness, why should such a poor animal wonder, that it cannot dart its eye through unnumbered worlds, or take in at a glance the vast system of the universe?" It is impossible that any thing revealed to us in the divine word, can by fair construction tend to impair the freedom, or destroy the accountableness of man. Principles are to be judged by the effects they produce; but these must be taken in their entire range, comprehending both actions and dispositions. It has been justly observed, "That the sublimest truths and the profoundest mysteries of religion, are as level to the capacities of the meanest, as of the highest human intellect. By neither are they to be fully fathomed; by both they may be easily believed, on the sure testimony of divine Revelation. As simple and important

facts, which connect time with eternity, and heaven with earth, they belong equally to men of every order, and are directly calculated to produce those emotions of awe and reverence, of faith and hope, and reliance on the Divine Presence, Providence, Justice, and Benevolence, of which the consequences must be in the highest degree moral."

In the religious world, there are *formalists* and *bigots*, who bind themselves to a party, and hate and misrepresent all others. Living Bonners are yet to be found among us, who would gladly condemn and anathematize, and light again the fires of Smithfield, if law and public opinion did not prevent them. The *sword* and the *torch* are struck out of their hands, but *Watchwords* and *Shibboleths* are still in their mouths. To be *open* and *avowed* enemies to toleration, and advocates of persecution, would ill accord with the temper of the times; but they urge imperious claims to fix the standard of Christianity, and wish every doctrine and sentiment, and rite, to be measured by their own line and plummet. Persons of this character are for the most part remarkably ill-informed, as well as obstinate. "Men, (says Cowper, in one of his Letters) who profess themselves adepts in mathematical knowledge, in astronomy, in jurisprudence, are generally as well qualified as they would appear. The reason may be, that they are always liable to detection, should they attempt to impose upon mankind, and therefore take care to be what they pretend. In religion alone, a profession is often slightly taken up, and slovenly carried on, because forsooth, candour and charity require us to hope the best, and judge favourably of our neighbour, and because it is easy to deceive the ignorant, who are a great majority

on this subject. Let a man attach himself to a particular party, contend furiously for what are properly called evangelical doctrines, and enlist himself under the banner of some popular preacher, and the business is done."

In the religious world, there are a number of *idle, wandering, troublesome tattlers.* These frivolous gossips make little use of their time, but much of their tongues. Whatever they can collect, respecting ministers and their congregations, families or individuals, they circulate with the utmost avidity. They know every body's business and designs, and generally deal more in censures than commendations. There were persons of this description in the first age of the church, and the apostle Paul has drawn their character to the life. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not." Give no quarter, no countenance, no ear to these people.

Andrew Fuller somewhere says, "The lives of professors are books, which the men of the world can read, and will read, when they care not to read any other." Are not, we might ask, some of them very difficult to make out? The characters in these living books are so ill-informed, so crossed and confused, so blotted and soiled, that after all our poring and puzzling, we are at a loss, and strangely bewildered; and when the meaning of particular parts is found, the motives are rather to be guessed than clearly gathered.

But though skeptics, enthusiasts, antinomians, bigots, formalists, and tattlers, are plentifully scattered throughout the religious world, I am far from wishing to discourage you, by presenting only

the dark side. In this *inclosure*, to resume a figure used before, you may find regions of light, and purity, and peace. There are men of extensive knowledge, correct taste, active benevolence, glowing devotion, and consistent conduct, whose friendship you cannot too highly prize. Cast in your lot with these honoured servants of God, and account them the excellent of the earth, in whom you may justly take delight. Value and improve every opportunity of social intercourse and sacred communion with them. As you observe the elevation, enlargement, and spirituality of their minds, and the condescension, dignity, and grace of their manners, copy and imitate what you admire. As you advance in years, you may be called in duty to devote a larger portion of time to those noble institutions of a public kind, which depend chiefly for their direction and support, on the union and zeal of good men. It is an honour to take part with those who are making sacrifices and exertions, to promote the interests of humanity and justice, to extend the empire of truth and knowledge, virtue and piety. Admiring as I do, the benevolence which characterizes the British metropolis, it is a doubt with me, whether charitable societies are not too much multiplied. Those who are able and willing to assist them, are overloaded and distracted, by the pressing demands which private and public meetings make upon their time and attention. In this, as in other matters, there is a practical wisdom, which is profitable to direct. A young man should be ready to lend a helping hand in every good work; yet not suffer his name to be on many committees, when it is impossible that he can give his attendance.

The first and most important duties are *at home.*

A species of dissipation exists in the *religious*, as well as in the *fashionable* world. While you associate with men of piety, either for friendship or purposes of benevolence, beware of being too much *from home*. Single and unconnected at present, you have many things to learn and to do, which require assiduity and perseverance; and should you, after a time, enter into the married state, this new relation will bring new and momentous duties. All that I have said, on the care necessary in selecting your companions, applies with tenfold force to the choice of a companion for life. In this matter, I hope you will be happy enough to meet with one who may prove a help-meet for you, a centre of attraction, and a source of endearment, in that little domestic circle where pleasure pours her purest sweets, and piety shows her fairest fruits.

I have thought it my duty to set before you the errors and inconsistencies which are to be found, and ought to be avoided, even in the religious world; and I have intimated what sort of characters should be chosen as your friends. Let prudence be joined with zeal, and faithfulness with charity. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." But the brightest pattern that you can place before you, is the example of Christ, and the best motives by which you can be actuated, must be drawn from his word. Here you have excellence without spot and blemish; truth without mixture and alloy. In the great and precious promises of the gospel, in the rich and inexhaustible provisions of free mercy, you shall taste a sweetness and satisfaction, a solace and delight, which language has no adequate power to describe; yet beware of entertaining a false idea, even of the

enjoyments of religion. Some seem to think, that when they have reached certain heights of knowledge and experience, temptations and troubles are to vanish away, and that a life of privileges rather than of duties is to succeed; that having gained the victory, they may safely lay aside their arms. But the truth is, every stage of the divine life has its duties and trials. Expect them, that you may be prepared for them. Nor ought this to call forth one murmur, for "afflictions," as one observes, "supported by patience, and surmounted by fortitude, give the last finishing to the heroic and gracious character. Thus the vale of tears is the theatre of glory; that dark vale presents the scene for all the beauties of the bow of virtue to appear. Moral grandeur, like the sun, is brighter in the day of the storm; and never is so truly sublime, as when struggling through the darkness of an eclipse."

Let it be your constant aim to live near to God, resigned to his will, dependent on his care. Seek your supplies of wisdom, strength, refreshment, and consolation, from above. Remember, that at the throne of grace, you address *One*, who bears the *name* and sustains the endearing *relation* of a *Father*. Before his footstool prostrate your soul, clothed with humility, yet filled with filial confidence. There pour out your heart, and leave your fears and cares and sorrows; there breathe forth your desires, urge your requests, and offer your thanks, with ardour and importunity, gratitude and delight. Whatever secular designs engage your attention, whatever present advantages you possess or pursue, recollect that your *chief good* lies beyond the confines of mortality. Man is a prospective creature, and lives by anticipation of

the future; but the future has nothing great, pure, permanent, and satisfying, to offer, till we carry our thoughts over the narrow limits of time, to the grand and impressive realities of eternity.

I am far from desiring to give you any gloomy ideas of *this life*. By the goodness of God, we are loaded and enriched with daily benefits.—Cherish a lively gratitude; live and labour in hope; look more on the bright than the dark side of every thing. My own experience suggests this counsel. I have now lived just half a century in this changing world, and have enjoyed a great share of health, good spirits, and success in most of my undertakings. It was my happiness at an early period to know and love the God of my fathers, and the sense of his mercies to this hour cheers my heart and my course. I therefore exhort you, to value and enjoy even this life, but to keep your eye on the life to come. I think it is Pope who says,

> See some fit passion every age attend,
> Hope travels through, nor quits us at our end.

This in a sense is true, but as regards the mere men of the world, who despise or neglect religion, it should be remembered, that there is an antagonist passion, which also accompanies them to the end of their journey. And while hope gradually loses her freshness and vigour, fear, notwithstanding the efforts to conceal, weakens and suppresses her, and gains strength and potency at every new stage in the declivity of life. Hope may, in most cases, though faint and feeble, yet supported by artificial cordials, hold out to the end; but her antagonist, Fear, often so cripples and over powers her, that little benefit is derived from any thing

she can promise, and sometimes she is wholly destroyed on the brink of the dark valley.

Christianity alone gives a hope which blesses through life, and brightens the scenes beyond the grave. This hope will not make you ashamed; but render you happy and triumphant in old age, in sickness, in the pangs of dissolution, and in the precincts of eternity. Keep then constantly in view that inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Earthly gains and losses, joys and griefs, will have less power to agitate the mind, in proportion as your heart is fixed on the endearing treasures, honours, and delights of a better world. Consider these things, and the Lord give thee understanding and prudence in the conduct of life, peace and confidence in the hour of death, joy and glory in the fair regions of immortality.

Your affectionate Father.

THE LOVER OF EASE.

BY JANE TAYLOR.

In a dirty, ruinous looking house, that stood in one of the back streets of a smoky town, there lived an elderly man of the name of Smith. Very few people knew, and fewer cared any thing about him; yet it was impossible to pass his abode without noticing the broken window panes, mended with paper, or stuffed with rags; the wretched court-yard, overgrown with nettles, and bestrewed with fragments of earthen ware; the appearance of the whole bespeaking the sloth and misery of the owner. Smith himself was not often visible, but occasionally he might be seen on a sun-shiny morning, leaning with his arms folded over the pales of his yard, basking in the heat, like his old tabby cat. And sometimes on a dark evening, his long, lean, shabby figure might be discerned hovering over a handful of fire in his rusty grate. It is true, that there are in every town individuals equally wretched and comfortless; and it is also true, that in most, if not in every instance of the kind, there is more of fault than of misfortune. But, in the case of Smith, it is worthy of record, that he was a man remarkable for his relish for the good and agreeable things of life. Though he was wretched, he had certainly no taste for wretchedness; though he was destitute of pleasure, pleasure was the thing he most desired.

From his early childhood, his love of gratification was so great, that whenever an opportunity offered, he never failed to avail himself of it; whether to do so were right or wrong, in season or out of season, he would deny himself no enjoyment *then;* by which means he is denied every enjoyment *now.* So improvident are the indulgent, even in scorning the very things that are most valued by them!

Smith was apprenticed to an honest trade, and he wanted not ability to become more than ordinarily expert in it. But whenever his master's back was turned, he thought it more agreeable to gossip over the fire with his fellow apprentices, to crack a pocket full of nuts, to play a game of whist, to read a dirty novel, or even to sit resting his head on his hands over the bench, than to go on with his work. Thus, at the end of seven years, he left his master with an imperfect knowledge of his business, an indifferent character, and, worse than all, desultory and idle habits.

Now, if he had but so far denied himself while he was an apprentice, as to have applied diligently to his business, he might have earned money enough as a journeyman, to procure him all those comforts and enjoyments of which he was so fond. But instead of this, he was obliged to get work at low wages, when and where he could; so that he was poor, though he hated poverty, and he that was so fond of dainty fare, had many a scanty meal.

Smith was fond of company, and had among his other partialities, a strong love of praise. He would not deny himself, when any opportunity offered, the pitiful pleasure of fishing for a compliment, and of saying those little things to his own advantage, which always proved in fact to be to

his own disadvantage. Thus, among the most severe denials to which his want of self-denial exposed him, were the perpetual mortifications which vanity is sure to encounter. Instead of being admired, Smith was ridiculed and pitied by his most discerning acquaintance; and as he was poor, they took no pains to conceal their contempt.

Having, as before hinted, read a great many worthless novels during his apprenticeship, his indolent mind was often occupied in the injurious habit of *castle building*. There was no handsome and gallant chevalier in old romance, no elegant and accomplished hero of modern tale, with whom this meagre, thread-bare, and dirty journeyman, would not at times identify himself! "Who knows," he would often think, "but I may one day happen of good luck: some do, and why should not I!" Those persons have always the highest expectations from luck, who are least disposed to make use of their cunning. The many hours in every week that poor Smith sat dreaming over his hopes and his wishes for prosperity, would have done a great deal well employed, to help him out of adversity. But it was much easier, he thought, to sit still and wish for wealth and honour, than to work hard for competence and credit. At any rate, he would not, or, as he thought, he could not, deny himself this unprofitable amusement. Besides, he knew very well that the utmost diligence in his business would do no more than enable him to live with credit and comfort in his present rank of life; and that did not at all meet the ideas of one who was so familiar with great names, and high life, as are all readers of novels; so he preferred to wait for the incalculably small

chances of fortune, rather than to accept the certain rewards of industry. He thought the outside of a palace better than the inside of a cottage.

Every one who loves pleasure, knows how indispensable health is to the enjoyment of it: yet those who most value their ease, are generally the least careful in preserving it. Little acts of indulgence are apt to introduce strong habits of *intemperance*. Thus Smith quickly lost one of the great advantages of honest poverty, health. Surely it must have been a great denial to one, who was so fond of pleasure, to be always in pain! He had better have denied himself.

It would not have been an easy thing to have persuaded Smith in his youth, to commence a life of austerity, and submit to the rigours of a monastic rule. Yet, it may well be questioned whether the hardships, denials, and mortifications to which his want of self-denial exposed him, were not less tolerable than those he would in that case have endured. For is not abstinence to be preferred to hunger? penance to pain? retirement to obscurity? concealment to contempt? Is there, then, much to choose between the wretched Smith in his ruinous tenement, and a monk in the cloisters of La Trappe?

But how many people live in comfort and credit, who are little practised in the art of self-denial. If indulgence *always* reduced one to wretchedness and contempt, there would be nothing to be said for it. Nor is there any thing to be said for it, although the degrees of outward misery to which it subjects individuals are various. It is duly remarked by Dr. Johnson, that "in proportion as we consult our ease, we depart from happiness;" yes, in *exact* proportion. It is not necessary to be dirty, ragged, hungry, solitary and

despised, in order to be uncomfortable. A man, reclining on the softest couch, in the most splendid apartments in the kingdom, surrounded with obsequious attendants, and pampered with every delicacy, may be pretty nearly as devoid of comfort, as poor Smith in his miserable house. Few persons are more uneasy than they who are *quite at ease.*

If, then, the indulgent and pleasure-loving, had but a little more forethought and consideration, they would become self-denying, out of mere selfishness; from a conviction that round about is the nearest way to happiness.

How happy are they who, from better motives than their own immediate gratification, have learned to take up daily, the light cross; to bring every thought, word, and action, into captivity and holy obedience; and who thus reap the large benefit of present comfort, and satisfaction, with the good hope of an eternal reward!

END.

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